PRINCETON
REC. JUL 1881
THEOLOGICAL

Division.....
Section.....
No.....

SCC
2080

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR,

In View of the Present Controversy between INFIDELS and APOSTATES.

——*Nostrum est tantas componere Lites.*

The Second Edition.

By THOMAS WOOLSTON, sometime Fellow of *Sidney-College* in *Cambridge*.

LONDON:
Printed for the Author, Sold by him near *Moor-Gate*, and by the Bookfellers of *London* and *Westminster*. 1727.

[Price One Shilling.]

TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God

EDMUND,

Lord Biſhop of LONDON.

MY LORD,

UPON *no other View do I make a Dedication of this Diſcourſe to your* Lordſhip, *than to ſubmit it to your acute Judgment, expecting ſoon to hear of your Approbation or Diſlike of it. If it ſo happen, that you highly*

approve of it, I beg of you to be ſparing of your Commendations, leaſt I ſhould be puff'd up with them.

In my Moderator, *ſome Expreſſions dropt from my Pen about the Miracles of our Saviour, which, for want of Illuſtration then, gave your* Lordſhip *ſome Offence, and brought upon me more Trouble: But, having now fully and clearly explain'd my ſelf out of the Fathers, I hope you'll be reconciled to me; and as you are a Lover of Truth, will, againſt Intereſt and Prejudice, yield to the Force of it.*

Whether your Proſecution of me, for the Moderator, *was juſt and reaſonable, I'll not diſpute here, having already expoſtulated that Matter with you in ſeveral Letters, to which you would not condeſcend to give me any Anſwer. For what Reaſon you was ſilent, is beſt known to your ſelf. But, in my own Vindication, I hope, I may publiſh without Offence,*

fence, that your taking me for an Infidel, *was such a Miſtake, as I thought no* Scholar *could have made; and the Injury done to my Reputation and low Fortunes, by the Proſecution, ſo conſiderable, that the leaſt I expected from your* Lordſhip, *was a courteous Excuſe, if not an ample Compenſation, for it.*

As to the Expediency of proſecuting Infidels *for their Writings* (*in whoſe Cauſe I am the fartheſt of any Man from being engaged*) *I will here ſay nothing. The Argument,* pro *and* con, *has already, by one or other, been copiouſly handled. And I don't know but I might be, with your* Lordſhip, *on the perſecuting ſide of the Queſtion; but that it looks as if a Man was diſtruſtful of the Truth of Chriſtianity, and conſcious of his own Inability to defend it; or he would leave that* good Cauſe *to God himſelf, and the Sword of the Spirit, without calling upon the* Civil Magiſtrate *for his Aid and Aſſiſtance.*

That

That ſcurvy Writer *of the* Scheme of literal Prophecy, *&c. which your* Lordſhip *muſt have heard of, would inſinuate, that they are only atheiſtical* Prieſts, *who, for fear of their Intereſts in the Church, ſet Perſecutions on foot: But after your* Lordſhip *has publiſh'd a ſtrenuous Defence of Chriſtianity to the Purpoſe of our preſent Controverſy, I'll have no ſuch Suſpicions of you.*

Your Lordſhip's *perſecuting* (*or, if you will, proſecuting*) *Humour, is reputedly all pure Zeal for God's Glory; and, with all my Heart, let it be ſo accounted, whether it be according to Knowledge or not. Againſt Popery and Infidelity you are all Ardency! Who does not commend you? Who can queſtion the Sincerity of the Zeal of a Proteſtant* Biſhop, *and of a Proteſtant* Clergy, *when they perſecute the Enemies of their Church, that conſiders their own Steadineſs to Principles againſt Intereſt, under all Changes, ſince*

ſince the Reformation; and their Abhorrence of Extortion upon the People, for the Duties of their Function, in and about this City. Such Honeſty and Conſtancy in their Profeſſion, is a Proof of the Integrity of their Hearts, or I know not where to find one.

But that your Lordſhip's *Zeal for Religion is very remarkable and ſucceſsful, I could prove by many Inſtances; one is,* that *of your routing a turbulent Sect of* Peripateticks *out of St.* Paul's *Cathedral; and if you could as effectually clear* Chriſt's *Church of* Infidels, *what a glorious Biſhop would you be!*

And what Pitty is it, that Infidels *likewiſe are not to be quell'd with your Threats and Terrors! which (without the Weapons of ſharp Reaſonings, and thumping Arguments, that others are for the Uſe of) would tranſmit your Fame to Poſterity, for a notable Champion for Chriſtianity, as certainly as, that your judi-*

cious

cious Prosecution of the Moderator *for Infidelity is here remember'd by,*

MY LORD,

The Admirer of

Your Zeal,

London,
April 17th
1727.

Wisdom and

Conduct,

Thomas Woolston.

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR, &c.

IF ever there was an uſeful Controverſy ſtarted, or revived in this Age of the Church, it is *this* about the *Meſſiahſhip* of the holy Jeſus, which the *Diſcourſe of the Grounds*, &c. has of late rais'd. I believe this Controverſy will end in the abſolute Demonſtration of Jeſus's *Meſſiahſhip* from Prophecy, which is the only way to prove him to be the

Messiah, that great Prophet expected by the *Jews*, and promised under the Old Testament. And tho' this way of Proof from Prophecy seems to labour under many Difficulties at present, and tho' some *Writers* against the *Grounds*, being distressed with those Difficulties, are for seeking Refuge in the Miracles of our Saviour; yet we must persist in it, till what I have no doubt of, his *Messiahship* shall be clearly made out by it.

And the way in Prophecy that I would take for the Proof of *Jesus*'s *Messiahship*, should be by an allegorical Interpretation, and Application of the Law and the Prophets to him; the very same way, that all the Fathers of the Church have gone in; and the very same way, in which all the ancient *Jews* say their *Messiah* was to fulfil the Law and the Prophets: But this way does not please our ecclesiastical *Writers* in this Controversy, neither will they at present give any ear to it.

The Way in Prophecy that they are for taking, is by a literal Interpretation and Application of some Prophecies of the Old Testament to our *Jesus*, but they are hitherto unsuccessful in this Way. The Authors of the *Grounds*, and of the *Scheme*, grievously perplex them with their Objections against this way of Proof, so far as,

being

being ſenſible, I ſay, of almoſt inſuperable Difficulties in it, they are flying apace to the Miracles of our Saviour, as to their ſole and grand Refuge.

But to ſhow that there's no Sanctuary for them in the Miracles of our Saviour, I write this Diſcourſe: And this I do, not for the Service of Infidelity, which has no Place in my Heart, but for the Honour of the Holy *Jeſus*, and to reduce the *Clergy* to the good old way of interpreting Prophecies, which the Church has unhappily apoſtatis'd from, and which, upon the Teſtimony of the Fathers, will, one Day, be the Converſion of *Jews* and *Gentiles*.

For this Opinion, that there is no Sanctuary in the Miracles of our Saviour, I chanc'd to ſay in the *Moderator*, (1) *That Jeſus's Miracles, as they are now-a-days underſtood, make nothing for his Authority and Meſſiahſhip*. And again, (2) *That I believe, upon good Authority, ſome of the Miracles of Jeſus, as recorded by the Evangeliſts, were never wrought, but are only related as prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what will be myſteriouſly and more wonderfully done by him:* Which Expreſſions gave Offence to ſome of our *Clergy*, and brought upon me their

(1) Page 44. (2) Page 53.

Indignation and Diſpleaſure. I ſee no Reaſon to depart from the ſaid Expreſſions, or ſo much as to palliate and ſoften them, much leſs to retract them; but in Maintenance of my Opinion, to the Honour of our *Meſſiah*, and the Defence of Chriſtianity, I write this Treatiſe on Jeſus's Miracles, and take this Method following.

I. I will ſhow, that the Miracles of healing all manner of bodily Diſeaſes, which *Jeſus* was juſtly famed for, are none of the proper Miracles of the *Meſſiah*, neither are they ſo much as a good Proof of his Divine Authority to found a Religion.

II. That the literal Hiſtory of many of the Miracles of Jeſus, as recorded by the Evangeliſts, does imply Abſurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities, conſequently they, either in whole or in part, were never wrought, as they are commonly believed now-a-days, but are only related as prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what would be myſteriouſly and more wonderfully done by him.

III. I ſhall conſider what Jeſus means, when he appeals to his Miracles as to a Teſtimony and Witneſs of his Divine Authority, and ſhow, that he could not properly

perly and ultimately refer to thoſe he then wrought in the *Fleſh*, but to thoſe myſtical ones, which he would do in the *Spirit*; of which thoſe wrought in the Fleſh are but mere Types and Shadows.

In treating on theſe Heads, I ſhall not confine my ſelf only to Reaſon, but alſo to the expreſs Authority of the Fathers, thoſe holy, venerable, and learned Preachers of the Goſpel in the firſt Ages of the Church, who took our Religion from the Hands of the Apoſtles, and of apoſtolical Men, who dy'd, ſome of them, and ſuffer'd for the Doctrine they taught, who profeſſedly and confeſſedly were endu'd with divine and extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit; who conſequently can't be ſuppoſed to be Corrupters of Chriſtianity, or Teachers of falſe Notions about the Miracles of our Saviour, or ſo much as miſtaken about the apoſtolical and evangelical Senſe and Nature of them. I know not how it comes to paſs, but I am a profound Admirer, and an almoſt implicit Believer of the Authority of the Fathers, whom I look upon as vaſt Philoſophers, very great Scholars, and moſt orthodox Divines. Whatever they concurrently aſſert, I firmly believe. And tho' they are, for the moſt part, myſterious Writers out of the Reach of the Capacities

Capacities of many, who ſlight them; yet I, who have had the Honour and Happineſs of much of their Acquaintance, fancy my ſelf well appriſed of their Meanings. If at any time I read a Paſſage in them which I don't preſently apprehend, I ſalute it with Veneration for all that, till my Underſtanding is opened to receive the Senſe of it. If I meet with but a ſingle Opinion in any one of them, I pay my Reſpects to it; but where there is an Harmony and Agreement of Opinion amongſt them, it is with me, and ought to be with all Chriſtians, of ſuch Weight, as to bear down all Prejudice, Oppoſition, and Contradiction before it; or the Authority of no Man, whether ancient or modern, is to have any Regard paid to it; and of what ill Conſequence to Religion ſuch an utter Rejection of Authority will be, I need not ſay.

This I thought fit to premiſe, concerning the Authority of the Fathers, to abate of the Prejudice beforehand, which ſome may conceive againſt the following Diſcourſe about the Miracles of *Jeſus*. I don't queſtion, but ſome may be ſtartled at the foregoing Heads, as if, what is the fartheſt of any thing from my Heart, the Service of Infidelity was in View; but craving the Temper and Patience of ſuch Readers for a while,

a while, and they shall find, that its no other than just Reasoning, clear Truth, and primitive Doctrine about *Jesus*'s Miracles, that I advance: Or if it should so happen, that none besides my self should discern the Reasoning and Truth of the Argument; yet I hope it will not be thought a Crime to revive primitive Doctrine, which none will be able to deny it to be, whether they like it or not. If I err, I err upon Choice with the Fathers, of whose Faith I am. And if any are offended at what follows about the Miracles of *Christ*, let them turn their Displeasure and Indignation against the Fathers, for whose express or implicit Opinions I can be deserving of no Blame.

I am sorry for the Occasion of such a Preface against Offence, which the Apostacy of the Age, and its Unacquaintedness with the Fathers, has made necessary. So I enter upon the particular handling of the Heads foregoing. And

I. I will show that the Miracles of healing all manner of bodily Diseases, which *Jesus* was justly famed for, are none of the proper Miracles of the Messiah, nor are they so much as a good Proof of *Jesus*'s divine Authority to found and introduce a Religion into the World.

And

And to do this, let us consider, first, in general, what was the Opinion of the Fathers about the Writings of the *Evangelists*, in which the Life of *Christ* is recorded. *Eucherius* says, (3) *That the Scriptures of the New as well as Old Testament, are to be interpreted in an allegorical Sense.* And this his Opinion, is no other than the common one of the first Ages of the Church, as might be proved by many the like Expressions of other Fathers. As in such Expressions, they do not except the Writings of the *Evangelists*; so they must include the History of *Christ*'s Miracles, which as well as other Parts of the History of his Life, is to be allegoriz'd for the sake of its true Meaning; consequently the literal Story of Christ's Miracles proves nothing.

But let's hear particularly their Opinion of the Actions and Miracles of our Saviour. *Origen* says, that (4) *Whatsoever Jesus did in the Flesh, was but typical and symbolical of what he would do in the*

(3) Universam porro Sacram Scripturam tam Novi quam Veteris Testamenti ad allegoricum sensum esse sumendam, admonet nos vel illud, Aperiam os meum in Parabolis. *In Præfat. ad Form. Spirit. Intell.*

(4) Si quidem Symbola quædam erant quæ tunc gerebantur eorum, quæ Jesu virtute semper perficiuntur. *In Mat.* C. xv.

Spirit;

Spirit; and to our Purpoſe, (5) that *the ſeveral bodily Diſeaſes which he healed, were no other than Figures of the ſpiritual Infirmities of the Soul, that are to be cured by him.* St. *Hilary* is of the ſame Mind with *Origen*, as any one may ſee by the (6) Expreſſions referr'd to, and his Commentary on St. *Matthew*. St. *Auguſtin*, (7) and St. *John* (8) of *Jeruſalem*, both ſay, that the Works of *Jeſus* import farther Myſteries; and with them, the reſt of the Fathers agree, making the Miracles that *Jeſus* did then, no more than the Shadow of ſome more powerful and myſtical Operations to be done by him, as I could ſhow by more Citations out of them, if it was needful. But from the foregoing Citations out of the Fathers it is plain, in their Opinion, that our modern *Divines* are in the wrong of it, to lay much Streſs on any of the Operations of *Jeſus*, which

(5) Omnis languor & omnis Infirmitas quam ſanavit ſalvator tunc in Populo referuntur ad Infirmitates ſpirituales Animarum, *&c.* *In* Mat. *C.* xvii.

(6) Chriſti Geſta aliud portendunt. *In* Mat. *C.* xii. Evangelicis geſtis eſt interior Senſus, *C.* xiv. Hæc licet in præſens geſta ſunt, quid tamen in futurum ſignificent contuendum eſt, *C.* x. Peragunt formam futuri geſta præſentia, *C.* xxi.

(7) Quæ a Jeſu facta ſunt, alicujus ſignificantia erant. *Serm.* 77.

(8) Omne quod fecit Jeſus, Sacramenta ſunt. *Homil.* 31. *in* Marc. 9.

he did in the Fleſh, for the Proof of his divine Authority and *Meſſiahſhip*, which is only to be proved by his more myſterious Works, of which thoſe done in the Fleſh are but Type and Figure.

But to come cloſer to the Purpoſe, let's ſee how indifferently, I had almoſt ſaid contemptibly, the Fathers ſpeak of the Miracles of *Jeſus*, and particularly of his Power of healing all bodily Diſeaſes, which by modern *Writers* is ſo much magnified and extoll'd. St. *Irenæus* ſays, (9) that if *we conſider only the then temporal Uſe of Jeſus's Power of Healing, he did nothing grand and wonderful*; conſequently, *Irenæus* could not hold, that *Jeſus*'s Miracles then wrought, were a ſufficient Proof of his divine Authority, much leſs of his *Meſſiahſhip*. *Origen* ſays (10) that *tho' many were brought to believe in Jeſus upon the Fame of the Miracles which he did once among the* Jews, *yet* (what implies the Inſufficiency of them for the Converſion of Men) *he intimates that his greater and myſtical Works do prove his Authority*. St. *John* of *Jeruſalem* ſays, (11) that *Je-*

(9) Si enim temporalis erat ab eo Utilitas, nihil grande præſtitit iis, qui ab eo curati ſunt, *L. V.* C. 12. *S.* 6.

(10) Contra Celſum, *L.* 11.

(11) Cœcum curavit, magnum quidem eſt, quod fecit, ſed niſit quotidie fiat, quod olim factum, nobis quidem magnum eſſe ceſſavit. *Homil.* 30. *in* Marc. 9.

ſus's

ſus's Cures performed upon the Blind, &c. *were indeed conſiderable and great, but unleſs he do daily as mighty Works in his Church, we ought to forbear our Admiration of him.* St. *Auguſtin* not only ſays (12) that *if we examine into Jeſus's Miracles by humane Reaſon, we ſhall find he did nothing great, conſidering his Almighty Power, and conſidering his Goodneſs, what he did was but little*; but he tells us alſo, that (13) *ſuch Works as Jeſus did, might be imputed to, and effected by Magic Art.* And accordingly *Moſes* and our Saviour himſelf confeſs, that falſe Prophets, and falſe Chriſt's, will do Miracles; and *Anti-Chriſt* himſelf, according to St. *Paul*, will do them to the Deception of Mankind. Nay, the Fathers (14) ſay, what I believe, that *Anti-Chriſt* will imitate and equal *Jeſus* in all his Miracles which he wrought of old. How then can we diſtinguiſh the true Prophet from the falſe, the true *Chriſt* from the *Anti-chriſt* by Miracles? Our *Divines* will find it

(12) Si humano captu & ingenio conſideremus Jeſum facientem, & quod ad poteſtatem non magnum aliquid fecit, & quod ad benignitatem, parvum fecit. *In* Johan. *Cap.* v. *Tract.* 17.

(13) Etſi atteſtabantur Miracula, non defuiſſent (ſicut & nunc muſſitant) qui magicæ potentiæ cuncta illa tribuerent. *Cont. Fauſt. L.* XII. *C.* 45.

(14) *Vid.* Sanctum *Auguſtinum* de *Anti-chriſto.*

hard to do it, if what the Fathers ſay of *Anti-chriſt* be found true. Moreover Hiſtory affords us Inſtances of Men, ſuch as of *Apollonius Tyanæus*, *Veſpaſian*, and of the *Iriſh Stroaker*, *Greatrex*, who have miraculouſly cured Diſeaſes to the Admiration of Mankind, as well as our *Jeſus*: But if any of them, or any other greater Worker of Miracles than they were, ſhould withall aſſume to himſelf the Title of a Prophet, and Author of a new Religion, I humbly conceive, we ought not to give heed to him.

Neither is there the leaſt Reaſon that we ſhould; for the Power of doing Miracles is no certain, nor rational Seal of the Commiſſion and Authority of a divine Lawgiver. St. *Paul* ſays (15) there is a *Diverſity of the Gifts of the Spirit, for to one is given by the Spirit, the Word of Wiſdom; to another the Word of Knowledge; to another the Gift of Healing; to another the working of Miracles; to another Prophecy; to another diſcerning of Spirit; to another divers Kinds of Tongues; to another the Interpretation of Tongues.* Theſe Gifts may be given apart and ſeparately. One of them may be conferr'd on this Man, and another of them

(15) 1 *Cor.* C. xii.

on

on his Neighbour. There is no Neceſſity that any two or more of theſe Gifts ſhould meet in one Man. To argue then, that a Man, who has one of theſe Gifts, muſt have the other; that is, that he muſt needs have the Gift of Wiſdom, or of Prophecy, or of diſcerning of Spirits, or of divers Kinds of Tongues, becauſe he has the Gift of Healing and of working Miracles, is very inconcluſive, and falſe Reaſoning: And yet this is the Reaſoning of our modern Writers who would prove *Jeſus's* Authority, to found a Religion, from his Miracles. I don't queſtion but *Jeſus* had all the foreſaid Gifts and Powers of the Spirit in a moſt ſuperlative Degree; but then it is unreaſonably inferr'd, for all that, that a Man, becauſe he of Certainty has ſome of them, muſt of conſequence have the other. St. *Auguſtin* (16) cautions us againſt being deceived into a good Opinion of a Man's Wiſdom, becauſe of his Power to do Miracles. And I think accordingly, that we may as well ſay, that the ſtrongeſt Man is the wiſeſt; or that a good Phyſician muſt needs be a good Caſuiſt; or that the beſt

(16) Atque illud ad Rem maxime partineat, ne decipiamur tendentes ad Contemplationem Veritatis—Arbitrantes ibi oſſe inviſibilem ſapientiam, ubi Miraculum viſibile viderimus. *In Serm. Dom. in monte, Lib.* 2. *Sect.* 84.

Mathe-

Mathematician is the ableſt Stateſman, as that *Jeſus*, becauſe he was a Worker of Miracles, ſuch as his are, and a Healer of all manner of Diſeaſes, ought to be received as the Guide of our Conſciences, the Director of our Underſtanding, the Ruler of our Hearts, and the Author of a Religion.

What then will the Writers againſt the *Grounds* do to prove *Jeſus*'s Authority and *Meſſiahſhip* from his Miracles? Or how by his Miracles will they be able to diſtinguiſh him from an Impoſtor, a falſe Prophet, and the *Anti-chriſt?* Why, they will ſay perhaps,

1. That beſides Greatneſs of Power, there was nothing but Goodneſs, Kindneſs, and Love to Mankind ſhewn in *Jeſus*'s Miracles. As to the Miracles of falſe Prophets and Impoſtors, if they be, many of them, of a kind and benevolent Aſpect, yet the *Devil*'s Foot, if we look well to it, will diſcover it ſelf in ſome ludicrous and miſchievous Pranks: But *Jeſus*'s Miracles were all of a beneficent Nature; he went about doing good, healing all manner of Diſeaſes among the People, and did no Wrong to any one; which is a good Argument, they ſay, of his divine Authority, or God would not have ſuffer'd, nor the *Devil* have work'd ſuch a Teſtimony in Behalf of it.

On

On this Head our *Divines* are copious and rhetorical, and many notable and florid Harangues have they made on it. But

In anſwer to them, they don't ſeem to have their Memories at hand, when they declaim at this rate. The Fathers, upon whoſe Authority I write, will tell ſuch Orators, that *Jeſus*, if his Miracles are to be underſtood in the literal Senſe, did not only as fooliſh Things as any Impoſtor could do, but very injurious ones to Mankind. I ſhall not here inſtance in the ſeemingly fooliſh and injurious Things which *Jeſus* did for Miracles, intending under the next Head to ſpeak to ſome of them: But they are ſuch, if literally true, as our *Divines* do believe, as are enough to turn our Stomachs againſt ſuch a Prophet; and enough to make us take him for a *Conjuror*, a *Sorcerer*, and a *Wizard*, rather than the *Meſſiah* and Prophet of the moſt High God. But

2. To prove the *Meſſiahſhip* of the holy *Jeſus* from his Miracles, our *Divines* urge the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament, ſuch as that of *Iſaiah*, *C.* xxxv. *V.* 5, 6. *Then the Eyes of the Blind ſhall be opened, and the Ears of the Deaf ſhall be unſtopp'd; then ſhall the lame Man leap as the Hart, and the Tongue of the Dumb ſing*; and ſay that theſe Prophecies were accurately fulfill'd

fill'd by our *Jesus* in the several specifical Cures of Blindness, Deafness, Lameness, and Dumbness, which he often perform'd upon one or other; and, inasmuch as our Saviour seems to appeal to such Prophecies, do conclude this his Accomplishment of them, to be no less than a Demonstration that he was the true *Messiah*, that great Prophet, who was to come into the World. To which I answer,

First, That the Accomplishment of Prophecies that can neither be given forth by human Foresight, nor fulfill'd in a Counterfeit, are good Proofs of *Jesus*'s *Messiahship*: But then, what shall we say if others besides *Jesus* should do the like Cures and Miracles? It is said of *Anti-christ*, and I believe it, that he will not only do all the Miracles that *Jesus* did, but will appeal to the like Prophecies too. How then we are to distinguish the *true* Christ from the *false* Christ by Miracles and Prophecies in this Case, is the Question, which I leave with our *Divines* to consider of an Answer to, against the Time that it is proved that *Anti-christ* does all those Miracles which *Jesus* in the Flesh wrought. But

Secondly, The foresaid Prophecies, and others mentioned in *Isaiah*, neither were, nor could be Prophecies of the miraculous Cures of bodily Diseases which *Jesus then* did.

did. And this may be made appear, not only from the Context of thoſe Prophecies which received then no Accompliſhment from *Jeſus*, who ought to have fulfill'd one Part of the Prophecy as well as the other, or is not to be taken for the Fulfiller of either, but from the Opinion of both *Jews* and *Fathers*, who adjourn the Accompliſhment of thoſe Prophecies to Chriſt's ſpiritual Advent. But

Thirdly, The Prophet *Iſaiah*, in the Place above cited, ſpeaks not of bodily Blindneſs, *&c.* which the *Meſſiah* is to heal, but of the ſpiritual Diſtempers of the Soul, metaphorically ſo called; as may be eaſily proved, not only from the Prophecies themſelves, but from the old *Jews*, who were allegorical Interpreters of thoſe Diſtempers, and from the antient Fathers, (17) who ſo underſtood them. Conſequently our *Jeſus*'s healing of thoſe bodily Diſeaſes, was no proper Accompliſhment of thoſe Prophecies. It is true our Saviour, *Matt.* xi. 4, 5. ſeems to appeal

(17) Interim completur & Iſaiæ Prophetia non tantum in corporalibus, verum etiam in ſpiritualibus, *Origen. In Matt. Cap.* xv. Aperientur igitur Oculi cæcorum, aures ſurdorum audient, nam qui quondam divinis ſermonibus rejectis myſticam Sanctorum Inſtitutionem recipere non ſtuduerunt, libenter eam admittent. St. *Cyril in* Loc. Iſ. *Vide & Sanctum Hieronymum in* Loc. Iſai.

to thoſe Prophecies, and to make his Cure of corporal Diſtempers an Accompliſhment of them: But he means not in the literal Senſe, that our *Divines* take him in, as I ſhall ſhow hereafter, when I come to conſider what *Jeſus* means, by appealing to his Works and Miracles, as bearing Witneſs of him.

Our *Divines* then may admire and adore *Jeſus* as much as they pleaſe for his Miracles of healing bodily Diſtempers, but I am for the ſpiritual *Meſſiah* that cures thoſe Diſtempers of the Soul, that metaphorically paſs under the Names of Blindneſs, Lameneſs, Deafneſs, *&c.* And the Cure of theſe ſpiritual Diſeaſes, is the proper and miraculous Work of the true *Meſſiah*; for the ſake of which, ſays (18) St. *Auguſtin*, *Jeſus* condeſcended to do thoſe *little* Miracles of healing bodily Diſtempers, which were but the Type and Shadow of his more ſtupendous Miracles of curing ſpiritual Diſeaſes. The Cure of ſpiritual Infirmities is a God-like (19) Work, above the Imitation of Man or of *Anti-chriſt*, infinitely

(18) Et nunc majores ſanitates operatur, propter quas non eſt dedignatus tunc exhibere illas minores. *In Serm.* 88.

(19) In quibus Spiritualibus maxime Chriſti Perſona eminet. *Auguſt. Quæſt.* 2. *in Lucam.*

more

more miraculous than the healing any bodily Diſtempers can be.

Whether our *Jeſus* be at this Day ſuch a ſpiritual *Meſſiah*, I leave to our *Divines* to conſider, with thoſe ſpiritual Diſtempers of the Church, that ſeem to want his miraculous Hand and Touch. The Fathers of the Church ſaid, that *Jeſus* was *in part* ſuch a ſpiritual *Meſſiah* in their time, and argued (20) his *Meſſiahſhip*, not from bodily Cures, but from his moſt miraculous Cures of the Diſeaſes of the Soul: But there was another and future Time, in which he would be ſuch a ſpiritual and glorious *Meſſiah* to the greateſt Perfection. In the mean while, no healing of corporal Diſtempers can prove *Jeſus* to be the *Meſſiah*, nor any other of his miraculous Works recorded in the *Evangeliſts:* So far from it, that

II. I ſhall prove that the literal Story of many of *Jeſus*'s Miracles, as they are recorded in the *Evangeliſts*, and commonly believed by Chriſtians, does imply Improbabilities and Incredibilities, and the groſſeſt Abſurdities, very diſhonourable to the

(20) Modo Caro cæca non aperit oculos miraculo Domini, ſed cor cæcum aperit oculos Sermoni Domini. Modo non reſurgit mortale cadaver, ſed reſurgit anima quæ mortua jucebat in vivo Cadavere, *&c. Auguſt. Serm.* 88. *S.* 3.

Name of Chriſt; conſequently, they, in whole, or in part, were never wrought, but are only related as prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what would be myſteriouſly and more wonderfully done by him.

The reading of this Head will, I doubt not, ſtrike with Horror ſome of our ſqueamiſh *Divines*, who, notwithſtanding they will ſacrifice almoſt any Principles to their Intereſt, will not bear that our literal evangelical Hiſtory of ſuch renown'd Miracles ſhould be thus called in Queſtion, and contemptuouſly ſpoken of. What does this *Author* mean, will ſome ſay, thus to do Service to Atheiſm and Infidelity? Away with him! Our Indignation is moved againſt him! No Cenſure and Puniſhment can be too ſevere for ſuch Impiety, Profaneneſs, and Blaſphemy, as is aim'd at, and imply'd in this Propoſition.

To calm therefore the Spirits, and abate the Prejudices of ſuch Accuſers, I muſt proceed with the greater Caution, and with Reaſon and Authority well fortify myſelf before and behind, or I ſhall feel the Weight of the Diſpleaſure of our *Divines*, who are prepoſſeſs'd of the Belief of the literal Story of all *Jeſus*'s Miracles.

Before then I enter upon the particular Examination of any of his Miracles, I will premiſe

premiſe two or three general Aſſertions of the Fathers about them. And firſt *Origen* (21) ſays, that in the hiſtorical Part of the Scriptures, *There are ſome Things inſerted as Hiſtory, which were never tranſacted, and which it was impoſſible ſhould be tranſacted; and other Things, again, that might poſſibly be done, but were not.* This he aſſerts of the Writings of the *Evangeliſts*, as well as of the Old Teſtament, and gives many Inſtances to this Purpoſe. St. *Hilary* (22) ſays, *There are many hiſtorical Paſſages of the New Teſtament, that if they are taken literally, are contrary to Senſe and Reaſon, and therefore there is a Neceſſity of a myſtical Interpretation.* And St. *Auguſtin* (23) ſays, that *there are hidden Myſteries in the Works and Miracles of our Saviour, which if we incauti-*

(21) Hiſtoria Scripturæ interdum interſerit quædam vel minus geſta, vel quæ omnino geri non poſſunt, interdum quæ poſſunt geri, nec tamen geſta ſunt. *De Principiis*, Lib. 4.

(22) Multa ſunt, quæ non ſinunt nos ſimplici ſenſu dicta evangelica ſuſcipere. Interpoſitis enim non nullis Rebus quæ ex Natura humani ſenſus ſibi contraria ſunt; Rationem quærere cæleſtis Intelligentiæ admonemur. *In Matt. L.* xx. *S.* 2.

(23) Evangelica Sacramenta in Chriſti factis ſignata omnibus non patent, & ea nonnulli minus diligenter interpretando afferunt plerumque pro ſalute Perniciem, & pro Cognitione Veritatis Errorem, *&c. De Quæſt. Divers. Queſt.* 84.

ouſly

ouſly and literally interpret, we ſhall run into Errors, and make grievous Blunders. Of the ſame Mind are the reſt of the Fathers, as might be proved by expreſs or implicit Citations; but, ſtudying Brevity, I think the three Teſtimonies above, enough to cool the Rage, and aſwage the Prejudices of my Adverſaries againſt the Propoſition before us, which I now come to a particular Conſideration of; that is, to ſhew that the Story of many of *Jeſus*'s Miracles is literally abſurd, improbable, and incredible. And

1. To ſpeak to that Miracle of *Jeſus*'s *driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple*, which all the (24) four Evangeliſts make mention of.

I have read in ſome modern Author, whoſe Name does not occur to my Memory, that this was, in his Opinion, the moſt ſtupendous Miracle that *Jeſus* wrought. And, in truth, it was a moſt aſtoniſhing one, if literally true, and *Jeſus* muſt appear more than a Man, he muſt put on an awful and moſt majeſtick Countenance to effect it. It is hard to conceive, how any one in the Form of a Man, and of a diſ-

(24) *Matt.* xxi. *Mark* xi. *Luke* xix. *John* ii.

piſed

piſed one too, (and we don't read that *Jeſus* chang'd his human Shape) with a Whip in his Hand, could execute ſuch a Work upon a great Multitude of People, who were none of his Diſciples, nor had any regard for him. Suppoſing he could, by his divine Power, infuſe a *panick* Fear into the People, yet what was the Reaſon that he was ſo *eaten up* with Zeal againſt the Profanation of that Houſe, which he himſelf came to deſtroy, and which he permitted, I may ſay commanded, to be filthily polluted not long after. But not to form by my ſelf an Invective againſt the Letter of this Story, let's hear what the Fathers ſay to it.

Origen makes the whole but a (25) Parable. His allegorical Expoſitions of it, are frequent, and one time or other he gives us the myſtical Meaning of every Part of it. By the *Temple*, he underſtands the Church: By the *Sellers* in the Temple, he means ſuch *Preachers* who make Merchandize of the Goſpel, whom the Spirit of Chriſt, ſome time or other, would rid his Church of. He is ſo far from believing any thing of the Letter of this Story, that

(25) In Comment. in *Matt.* xxi.

he

he has form'd a (26) large Argument againſt it: The Subſtance of which is, that if *Jeſus* had attempted any ſuch thing, the People would have reſiſted, and executed their Revenge on him; if he had effected it, the Merchants of the Temple might have reproach'd him with Damage done to their Wares; and would have juſtly accuſed him of a Riot againſt Law and Authority. Whether there is not Reaſon in this Argument of *Origen*, let any one judge.

(26) Porro cui curæ eſt accuratior Inquiſitio conſiderabit, an juxta dignitatem præſentis Vitæ erat, ut Jeſus rem talem auderet facere, extrudere videlicet Mercatorum Multitudinem, qui ad Diem feſtum aſcenderant, Diſtributuri boves ditioribus, & tanto populo oves mactandas per domos familiarium, quæ multorum millium complerent numerum; atque eos qui in rebus talibus gloriantes producturi erant in medio Columbas, quas multi empturi erant, ceu in Conventu celeberrimo convivaturi. Conſiderabit hic etiam, an Nummulariorum erat non accuſare Jeſum contumelioſe propter ſuas ipſorum effuſas pecunias & menſas ſubverſas. Quis autem flagello e funiculis verberatus & expulſus ab eo, qui penes eos habebatur vilis, hunc adortus non inclamaſſet totis viribus ſeſe ulciſcens? Cum præſertim haberet tantam multitudinem eorum, qui ſibi æque contumeliam fieri credebant, faventem ſibi adverſum Jeſum? Inſuper cenſideremus, Dei filium funiculos ſumentem; ſibique flagellum tenentem ad extrudendum e templo, annon repræſentet Præter audaciam & temeritatem, inordinatum etiam quiddam? In *Johan.* Tom. XI.

St. *Hilary*

St. *Hilary* is of the ſame Mind with *Origen*. He ſays that this Story is only a (27) Præfiguration of what will be done in Chriſt's Church upon another Occaſion. And he admoniſhes (28) us to ſearch into the profound and myſtical Import of every Part of it; particularly he hints that (29) by *the Seats of thoſe who ſell Doves*, may be underſtood the Pulpits of Preachers who make Sale of the Gifts of the Spirit, which is repreſented by a Dove. As to the Letter of the Story, he is plain enough, that there was no ſuch (30) Market kept in the Temple of *Jeruſalem:* And if any Hiſtorians beſides the *Evangeliſts* had aſſerted it, I know of none, who would have been ſo fooliſh as to believe that Oxen and Sheep and Goats were there ſold.

St. *Ambroſe* too is for the Myſtery, and againſt the Letter of this Story, ſaying, (31) what ſhould be the Reaſon that *Jeſus*

 ſhould

(27) Præfiguratio futurorum dictis præſentibus continetur. *In Matt.* xxi.

(28) Admonemur altius Verborum Virtutes in iſtius modi ſignificationibus contuendas, *ibid.*

(29) In Cathedra eſt ſacordotii ſedes; & eorum qui Spiritus ſancti Donum venale habent, Cathedras everter, *ibid.*

(30) Non habebant Judæi quod venire poſſent, neque erat quod emere quis poſſet, *ibid.*

(31) Cathedra autem Vendentium Columbas cur everterit? Secundum Litteram non intelligo. Admonet

ſhould overturn the Seats of thoſe that ſold Doves? This muſt be, ſays he, a figurative Story, and ſignifies nothing leſs than the future Ejection of Prieſts out of his Church, who ſhall make Gain and Merchandize of the Goſpel.

St. *Jerome*, as his manner is in other Caſes, gives us a literal Expoſition of this Miracle, as far as it will bear it: But then corrects himſelf again, ſaying, there are (32) Abſurdities in the Letter; but, according to its myſtical Meaning, *Jeſus* will enter his Temple of the Church, and caſt out of it Biſhops, Prieſts, and Deacons, who make a Trade of Preaching. And in another Place he tells us of the myſtical (33) Whip, that *Jeſus* will make uſe of to this Purpoſe.

St. *Auguſtin* alſo is againſt the Letter of the Story of this Miracle, ſaying, (34)

monet Typo ejectorum de Templo hujuſmodi Mercatorum, in Eccleſia Dei Conſortium eos habere non poſſe, qui ſancti Spiritus Gratiam nundinentur. *In Loc. Luc.*

(32) Juxta ſimplicem Intelligentiam—quod penitus abſurdum—cæterum ſecundum Myſticos Intellectus Jeſus ingreditur Templum Patris & ejicit omnes Epiſcopos, Presbyteros, & Diaconos, *&c. In Loc. Mat.*

(33) Faciet Dominus Flagellum de Scripturarum Textuum Teſtimoniis. *In Zechar.* C. xiv.

(34) Non magnum Peccatum, ſi hoc vendebant in Templo, quod emebatur, ut offerretur in Templo. *In Loc. Johan.*

Where

Where could be the great Sin of ſelling and buying Things in the Temple, that were for the Uſe of it, and offer'd as Sacrifice in it? We muſt therefore, ſays he, look for the Myſtery in this (35) figurative Story, and enquire what is meant by the Oxen, and Sheep, and Doves, and who are the Sellers of them in Chriſt's Church; and he is very poſitive that Eccleſiaſticks, who are ſelfiſh, and make worldly Gain of the Goſpel, are here meant. And as to the Expreſſion of *turning the Temple into a Den of Thieves*, he ſays it has Reſpect to the (36) *Clergy* in Time to come, who would make ſuch a Den of Chriſt's Church.

Laſtly, with the foregoing Fathers agrees St. *Theophylact*, who is an Allegoriſt too upon this Miracle, ſaying, that thoſe (37) who ſell Doves, are the Prieſts who ſell ſpiritual Gifts; and that Chriſt ſometime or other would overturn their Seats, and clear his Church of them. In another Place

(35) Qui ſunt tamen qui boves vendunt? ut in figura quæramus Myſterium facti, qui ſunt qui Oves vendunt & Columbas? ipſi ſunt qui ſua quærunt in Eccleſia, non quæ Jeſu Chriſti. *Ibid.*

(36) Vos enim feciſtis Domum meum, Domum Negotiationis & ſpeluncam Latronum, ſignificat futuros in Eccleſia. *L.* II. *Evang. Quæſt. Quaſt.* 48.

(37) Διδασκαλος ων, ου καλαγγελλει λογον, ει μη κερδος εχει, και τουτου την τραπεζαν ανατρεπει ο Κυριος. *In Johan.* C. ii.

he intimates what are meant by Oxen and Sheep, *viz.* the literal Senſe of the Scriptures. And if the literal Senſe be irrational and nonſenſical, the Metaphor we muſt allow to be proper, inaſmuch as now-a-days, dull and fooliſh and abſurd ſtuff we call Bulls, Fatlings, and Blunders.

Behold a wonderful Harmony among the Fathers in their Rejection of the literal, and Eſpouſal of the myſtical Senſe of this Miracle. It is ſaid of the Church in her firſt Ages, that ſhe was inſpired; and ſo ſhe was, or before an Hire for the Prieſthood was eſtabliſhed, and pleaded for, ſhe could never have written in this Faſhion. If the Fathers had lived now, and written thus, we ſhould have thought the Spirit of *Quakeriſm* was gotten amongſt them, or they would never have given ſuch an Expoſition of this Story to favour an Enmity to an *Hireling Prieſthood.*

How and when Chriſt's Power, according to the Figure and Parable before us, will enter his Church, and drive out of her theſe eccleſiaſtical Merchants, is not the Queſtion. But when ever it does ſo effectually, it will be a ſtupendous Miracle, much greater than the typical one is ſuppoſed to be; and not only a Proof of Chriſt's divine Power and Preſence in his Church, but an abſolute Demonſtration of his

his *Meſſiahſhip*, from his Accompliſhment both of the foreſaid Prophecies of the Fathers, and of other remarkable ones of the *Old Teſtament*, which will be then clearly underſtood, and which it is not my Buſineſs here to apply or mention.

Againſt the aforeſaid Expoſition of this Miracle, perhaps it may be objected, that (excepting a little Reaſoning againſt the Letter of it) this is only the chimerical and whimſical Dream of the Fathers, whoſe Notions are obſolete, and who (38) *have adulterated Chriſtianity with their Cant and Jargon*; and that none of our *Proteſtant* and Orthodox *Divines* have ever given into their Opinion.

I confeſs, that none of our Proteſtant *Divines*, whom I know, do embrace the foreſaid Expoſition of the Fathers, but it may be nothing the worſe for all that: And tho' their Expoſition may be very diſagreeable to the Prieſthood of this Age, yet I can tell them of the greateſt Man of theſe laſt Ages, and that was *Eraſmus*, who, cautiouſly expreſſing himſelf for fear of giving Offence to the *Clergy*, is of the ſame Mind with the Fathers; or he would

(38) *Chandler*'s Vindication, &c. p. 145.

not

not say that (39) *that Work of* Jesus *did prefigure somewhat else: For* Jesus *could not be zealous against the Prophanation of that Temple of the* Jews, *which was soon to be destroy'd, but meant to shew his Dislike and Hatred of ecclesiastical Covetousness, which, after the Way of the Type, he would take his Opportunity to rid the Church of.*

Before I dismiss this Miracle, I must observe, that if the Fathers are right above, then our *Latin* and *English* Translations of the Place in St. *Matthew* err in a main Point. Instead of reading, *and Jesus cast out them that sold and bought*, it should be, *those who sold and preach'd*; that is, sold what they preach'd: For the Word αγοραζειν, does more properly signify to *preach* than to *buy*; and in this Sense here, according to the Fathers, it should be construed.

Again, I must observe, that our Commentators are a little perplex'd to know

(39) Hoc facto longe aliud significabat Jesus, nec enim illum tantopere commovebat Templum illud mercimoniis Boum, Ovium, Hircorum & Columbarum profanatum; sed ostendere voluit Avaritiam & Quæstum fore capitalem Pestem Ecclesiæ, quam Templum, cujus Religio mox erat abolenda, figurabat—In nullum Hominum Genus acrius sæviit Jesus, sed hos ipse sibi servavit ejiciendos, cum videbitur. *In Loc. Matt.* xxi.

who,

who, and what thoſe Κολλυβισων, *Money-Changers*, were. The Greek (40) Word does import thoſe who have a Knack to barter away little baſe and Braſs Money, with the Effigies of an Ox or Bull on it, in exchange for good Coin. How applicable the Word was to any Merchants of the old Temple at *Jeruſalem*, is hard to conceive. But it is very agreeable to our eccleſiaſtical *Collybiſts*, who, as I may appeal to Freethinkers, vend their braſen-faced Bulls and Blunders at an extravagant and great Price. And if τραπεζας, which is tranſlated *Tables*, does properly ſignify (41) *Pulpits*, who can help it?

So much then on the Miracle of *Jeſus*'s driving the *Sellers* and *Buyers* out of the Temple. And now I appeal to our *Divines*, whether it be not an abſurd, improbable, and incredible Story according to the Letter, and whether it be any other than, as the Fathers ſaid of it, a prophetical and parabolical Narrative of what would be myſteriouſly and more wonderfully done by *Jeſus*. And ſo I come to ſpeak to a

2. Second Miracle of Jeſus, and that is,

(40) *Vid.* Suicerum in Κολλυβισης.
(41) Τραπεζα, apud Ariſtophanem eſt Pulpitum. *Vid.* Scapulam.

that

that of his (42) *casting the Devils out of the Madman or Madmen, and permitting them to enter into the Herd of Swine, which thereupon ran down a Precipice, and were all choaked in the Sea.*

To exorcise, or cast Devils out of the Possess'd, without considering the Nature of such a Possession, or the Nature and Power of the Devil, we'll allow to be not only a kind and beneficent Act; but a great Miracle. But then, be the Miracle as great as can be imagined, it is no more than what false Teachers, (43) *Workers of Iniquity*, and even some Artists amongst the *Jews*, have done before; consequently, such a Work of *Exorcism* in our Saviour, could be no Proof of his divine Authority. And if there was no more to be said against this Miracle, this is enough to set it aside, and to spoil the Argument of *Jesus*'s divine Power from it. But there are many Circumstances in the Story literally consider'd, that would induce us to call the Truth of the whole into question. How came those Madmen to have their Dwelling amongst the Tombs of a Burying-Ground? Where was the Humanity of the People, that did not take Care of them, in Pity to them,

(42) *Matt.* viii. *Mark* v. *Luke* viii.
(43) *Luke* xiii. v. 27.

as

as well as for the Safety of others? Or if no Chains, as the Text says, which is hardly credible, could hold them, it was possible surely, as well as lawful, to dispatch them, rather than their Neighbours and Passengers should be in Danger from them. Believe then this Part of the Story who can? But what's worse, its not credible there was any Herd of *Swine* in that Country. If any Historians but the *Evangelists* had said so, none would have believed it. The *Jews* are forbidden to eat Swine's Flesh; what then should they do with Swine (which are good for nothing till they are dead) who eat neither *Pig*, *Pork*, nor *Bacon?* Some may say that they were kept there for the Use of Strangers: but this could not be, because that after the Time of *Antiochus*, who polluted the Temple with the Sacrifice of an Hog, the *Jews* (44) forbad, under the Pain of an *Anathema*, the keeping of any *Swine* in their Country. Perhaps it may be said, that the *Gadarens*, so call'd from the Place of their Abode, were not *Jews*, but neighbouring *Gentiles*, with whom it was lawful to eat, and keep *Swine*. We will suppose so, tho' it is improbable; but then its unlikely (without better Reason

(44) *Spencer* de Legibus Hebræ, *p.* 117.

than at preſent we are appriſed of) that our Saviour would permit the Devils to enter into a Herd of them to their Deſtruction. Where was the Goodneſs and Juſtice of his ſo doing? Let our *Divines* account for it if they can. It is commonly ſaid of our Saviour, and I believe it, that his Life was entirely innocent, that his Miracles were all uſeful and beneficial to Mankind, and that he did no Wrong to any one. But how can this be rightly ſaid of him, if this Story be literally true? The Proprietors of the Swine were great Loſers and Sufferers; and we don't read that *Jeſus* made them amends, or that they deſerv'd ſuch Uſage from him. The Proprietors of the Swine, it ſeems, upon this Damage done them by *Jeſus*, deſire him to depart out of their Coaſts, to prevent farther Miſchief; which was gentler Reſentment, then we can imagine any others would have made of the like Injury. I know not what our *Divines* think of this Part of the Story, nor wherefore *Jeſus* eſcaped ſo well; but if any *Exorciſt* in this our Age and Nation, had pretended to expel the Devil out of one poſſeſs'd, and permitted him to enter into a Flock of Sheep, the People would have ſaid that he had bewitch'd both; and our Laws and Judges

too

too of the laſt Age, would have made him to ſwing for it.

Without Offence, I hope, I have argued againſt the Letter of this ſtrange Story of the holy *Jeſus*; I ſhould not have dared to have ſaid ſo much againſt it, but upon the Encouragement of *Origen* and other Fathers, who ſay, we ought to expoſe the Abſurdities of the Letter, as much as may be, to turn Men's Heads to the myſtical and true Meaning.

Let's hear then what the Fathers ſay to this Miracle. *Origen*'s Commentaries on this Part of St. *Matthew*, and St. *Luke*'s Goſpel, are loſt; otherwiſe unqueſtionably he would not only have told us, that he believed no more of the Letter of this Story, than he did of the Devil's (45) taking our Saviour to the Top of a Mountain, and ſhewing him all the Kingdoms of the World; but, as he is an admirable *Myſtiſt*, would have given us curious Light into the Allegory and Myſtery of it. But without *Origen*, we have enough in the other Fathers againſt the Letter of this Story.

St. *Hilary* reckoning up all the Parts of this Miracle together, ſays of it, that it is (46) typical and parabolical, and written

(45) *Lib.* IV. De Principiis.

(46) Hanc habeant Cauſam, ut eſſet in rebus gerendis futuri plena meditatio. *In Loc. Matt.* In hoc Typica ratio ſervata eſt. *Ibid.*

for our Meditation of what would be done hereafter by the holy *Jesus*. According to him, and other Fathers, the *Madman* is Mankind; or if they were two, they were *Jew* and *Gentile* at Christ's coming, who may be said to (47) be *possess'd with Devils*, in as much as they were under the Rule of diabolical Sins, and subject to the Worship of Δαιμονιων, false Deities, which we translate *Devils*. They were *so fierce* (48) *as no Chains could hold them*, because of their most furious Rage and Enmity to the Church, whom no Bonds of Reason could restrain from doing Violence to the Christians. They are said *to be* (49) *naked*, because they were destitute of the Clothing of the Spirit, and of Grace. And may be said to be *among the* (50) *Tombs*; because they were dead in Trespasses and Sins. After that *Jesus* had exorcis'd these diabolical Spirits out of the *Gentiles*, and brought them to their right Senses, which

(47) Significatæ sunt gentes quæ multis dæmonibus serviebant. *Augustin in Luc. Quæst.* 13.

(48) Humanum genus ad Adventum Domini vexabatur furore dementi, rumpens vincula rationis. St. *Amb. in Loc. Luc.*

(49) Nudus quicunque tegumentum Naturæ suæ & Virtutis amisit. *Amb. Ibid.*

(50) In tumulis Sepulchrorum; quid enim aliud sunt Corpora perfidorum, nisi quædam defunctorum Sepulchra in quibus Dei verbum non habitat. *Ibid.*

was

was upon their Converſion to the Faith; then a *good Way off*, ſome Ages after, did the like *Devils*, by divine Permiſſion, enter into a (51) *Herd of Swine*, i. e. into *Hereticks* of impure Lives, and furious Natures. What ſort of *Hereticks* are meant, or whether they are not to be underſtood of Chriſtians in general, let our *Divines* conſider. But one would be apt to think that *Miniſters of the Letter* are included, becauſe the *Letter* of the Scripture is myſtically call'd (52) *Swines* Food. I am not obliged to purſue the myſtical Interpretation of this Parable (for ſo I will call it) thro' all its Parts, nor to ſay what is meant by the Sea, that the *Swine* are to be abſorp't in; but leave our *Divines* to chew upon this myſtical Conſtruction given them in part, and to conſider, whether there's not a Neceſſity for ſuch an Interpretation to make the Story credible.

And thus have I given you the Opinion and Expoſition of the Fathers upon this Miracle, which they turn all into Myſtery. If our *Divines* are ſtill for adhering to the

(51) Videntes Dæmones non ſibi jam locum in gentibus derelinqui, ut patiatur habitare ſe in Hæreticis deprecantur. *Hilar. in Loc. Matt.*

(52) Litera eſt Palea, & frequenter evenit, ut homines hujus ſæculi myſtica neſcientes, ſimplici Scripturarum Lectione paſcuntur. *Hieron. in* Iſa. xi.

Letter

Letter of this Story, let them account for the Difficulties it is involv'd with. To cure Men violently distracted, and possess'd with *Devils*, is, whether it be miraculous or not, a good and great Work; but to send the *Devils*, who without *Jesus*'s Permission could not go, into the *Herd of Swine*, was an Injury done to the Proprietors, and unbecoming of the Goodness of the holy *Jesus*. Neither is there any other Way to solve the Difficulty, than by looking upon the whole, with the Fathers, as Type and Figure.

If this miraculous Story had been recorded of *Mahomet*, and not of *Jesus*, our *Divines*, I dare say, would have work'd it up to a Confutation of *Mahometanism*. *Mahomet* should have been, with them, nothing less than a *Wizard*, an *Enchanter*, a *Dealer* with familiar Spirits, a sworn *Slave* to the Devil; and his *Mussulmen* would have been hard put to it to write a good Defence of him.

When our Saviour was brought before *Pilate* to be arraign'd, try'd, and condemned, *Pilate* put this Question to the *Jews*, saying, *What Evil hath Jesus done?* If both, or either of the Stories above, had been literally true of *Jesus*, there had been no need of false Witnesses against him. The Merchants of the Temple were at hand,

who

who could have ſworn "that he was the "Author of an Uproar and Riot, the like "was never ſeen on their Market-Day; "that they were great Sufferers and Lo-"ſers in their Trades; and, whether he "or his Party had ſtolen any of their "Goods or not, yet ſome were embez-"zled, and others damaged; and all thro' "the outragious Violence of this unruly "Fellow, againſt Law and Authority." If ſuch Evidence as this was not enough to convict him of a capital Crime, then the *Swine-Herds* of the *Gadarenes* might have depoſed, "how they believed him to "be a *Wizard*, and had loſt Two thou-"ſand Swine through his Faſcinations: "That he bid the Devils to go into our "Cattle, is not to be deny'd. And if he "cured one or two of our Countrymen "of a violent Poſſeſſion, yet in as much as "he did us this Injury in our Swine, we "juſtly ſuſpect him of diabolical Practices "upon both."

Upon ſuch Evidence as this, *Pilate* asks the Opinion of *Jews*, ſaying, *What think you?* If they all had condemn'd him to be guilty of Death, it is no wonder, ſince there is not a *Jury* in *England* would have acquitted any one arraign'd and accuſed in the like Caſe.

It

It is well for our literal *Doctors*, that ſuch Accuſations were not brought againſt *Jeſus*; or their Heads would have been ſadly puzzled to vindicate his Innocence, and to prove the Injuſtice and Undeſervedneſs of his Death and Sufferings. But for this Reaſon, if no other, that no ſuch Crimes were laid to his Charge, I believe little or nothing of either of the ſeemingly miraculous Stories before us, but look upon them both as prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what would myſteriouſly and more wonderfully, and conſiſtently with the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of *Jeſus*, be done by him. And ſo I paſs to a

3. Third Miracle of *Jeſus*, and that is *his Transfiguration* (53) *on the Mount*. And this is the darkeſt and blindeſt Story of the whole Goſpel, which a Man can make neither Head nor Foot of; and I queſtion whether the Conceptions of any two thinking *Doctors* do agree about it. To ſay there is nothing in the Letter of this Story, we Believers muſt not, becauſe St. *Peter* (54) ſays he was an Eye-witneſs of *Jeſus*'s Majeſty, ſaw his Glory on the Mount, and heard the Voice out of the

(53) *Matt.* xvii. *Mark* ix. *Luke* ix.
(54) 2 *Pet.* i. 16, 17, 18.

Cloud.

Cloud. But as Infidels will be prying into the Conduct of *Jesus*'s Life, and forming their Exceptions to the Credibility or Probability of this or that part of it, so we Christians should be ready at an Answer, that might reasonably satisfy them; and not forcibly bear down their Opposition, which will make no sincere Converts of them. And I believe they would easily distress us with Difficulties and Objections to the Letter of this Story.

St. *Augustin* himself (55) owns, that the whole of it might be perform'd by Magic Art; and we know, in these our Days, that some Jugglers are strange Artists at the Imitation of a Voice, and to make it as if it came from a far off, when it is uttered close by us, and can cast themselves too into different Forms and Shapes, without a Miracle, to the Surprise and Admiration of Spectators.

But what, I trow, do our *Divines* mean by *Jesus*'s *Transfiguration*. We read that his Countenance did shine like the Sun, and his Raiment was made as white as Snow, and that's all. And in this enough can we think, to demonstrate that Transaction, a miraculous *Transfiguration?* Phi-

(55) Possunt Infideles istam Vocem delatam de Cælo, per conjecturas humanas & illicitas Curiositates ad magicas Artes referre. *In Serm.* xliii. §. 5.

losophers will tell us, that the Reflections of the Light of the Sun, will change the Appearance of Colours, and to none more than Whiteneſs; and *Sceptics* will ſay, that its no Wonder if the Countenance of *Jeſus* look'd *Rubicund*, when the Sun might ſhine on it.

The Word in the Original for *transfigured*, is μεταμορφώθη, that is, he was metamorphoſed, transform'd, or, if you will, transfigured. And what is to be underſtood by a *Metamorphoſis*, we are to learn not only from the natural Import of the Word, but from the ancient Uſe of it. Accordingly, it ſignifies nothing leſs than the Change or Transformation of a Perſon into the Forms, Shapes, and Eſſences of Creatures and Things of a quite different Species, Size, and Figure: But *Jeſus*, it is conceived, was not ſo *transfigured*. Our *Divines*, I ſuppoſe, would not have him thought ſuch a *Poſture-Maſter* for the whole World. If I, or any one elſe, ſhould aſſert, that *Jeſus* upon the Mount tranſform'd himſelf into a Calf, a Lyon, a Bear, a Ram, a Goat, an Hydra, a Stone, a Tree, and into many other Things of the animate and inanimate World, I dare ſay there would, among our orthodox *Divines*, be ſuch Exclamations againſt me for Blaſphemy, as the like were never heard of. They,

to

to be ſure, will not hear of ſuch a Tranſfiguration; nor, like good plain Believers, will bear any thing more than that *Jeſus*'s *Countenance did ſhine* like the Sun, and the Colour of his Veſtments was changed; which whether it comes up to the Import of a *Metamorphoſis* or not, they don't care.

But to cloſe with our *Divines*, and acknowledge that the glorious Change of *Jeſus*'s Countenance, and of the Colour of his Veſtments, was a true and proper Tranſfiguration, and that it was as real and wonderful a Miracle as could be wrought: But then we may, I hope, ask them, what was the particular Reaſon and Uſe of this Miracle? Was it a Miracle only for the ſake of a Miracle? That's an Abſurdity in the Opinion of (56) St. *Auguſtin*, who ſays, what is reaſonable to think, that all and every one of *Jeſus*'s Miracles had its particular End and Uſe; or he who is the Wiſdom as well as Power of God, had never wrought it. And what, I pray, was the Uſe of this Miracle? Of that the evangelical Hiſtory is ſilent, and our *Divines*, with all their reaſoning Faculties, can ſay nothing to it.

(56) Neque enim Miracula propter Miracula faciebat, ſed ut illa quæ faciebat, mira eſſent videntibus, vera eſſent intelligentibus. *In Serm.* xcviii. *Sect.* 3.

And what did *Moſes* and *Elias* on the Mount with *Jeſus?* Was it in their own proper Perſons that they appear'd? or were they only ſome Spectres and Apparitions in reſemblance of them? It is ſaid, that they were talking with *Jeſus*; what then did they talk about? The three greateſt Prophets and Philoſophers of the Univerſe could not poſſibly meet and confer together, but on the moſt ſublime, uſeful, and edifying Subject. Its ſtrange that the Apoſtles, who over-heard their Confabulation, did not make a Report of it, and tranſmit it to Poſterity for our Edification and Inſtruction. St. *Luke*, as our *Engliſh* Tranſlation has it, ſeems to ſay that they talk'd together of *Jeſus*'s *Deceaſe which he ſhould accompliſh at Jeruſalem*; but this can't be the Meaning of St. *Luke*'s (57) Words, which ſo interpreted, are no leſs than a *Barbariſm*, and, I appeal to our Greek *Criticks*, an improper Expreſſion of ſuch Signification. We muſt then look for a more proper Conſtruction of the Phraſe in St. *Luke*, or we muſt remain in the Dark, as to the Subject that *Moſes* and *Elias* talked with *Jeſus* about.

But further, Why could not this Miracle have been wrought in the Valley as

(57) Ἐλεγον τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ ἣν ἤμελλε πληροῦν, C. ix. v. 31.

well

well as upon a Mountain, whither *Jesus* and his three Apostles ascended for the Work of it? Naughty *Infidels* will say, it was for the Advantage of a Cloud, which often moves and rests on the Tops of Mountains, to display his Pranks in. And why was it not done in the Presence of the Multitude, as well as of his three Apostles? The more Witnesses of a Miracle, the better it is attested, and the more reasonably credited; and there could not surely be too many Witnesses of this, any more than of others of *Jesus*'s Miracles, if real ones. Ought not the unbelieving Multitude, for many Unbelievers unquestionably were amongst them, to have had a Sight and Hearing of this Miracle, as well as the Apostles? Who should rather see the Miracle, than those who wanted Conviction? Were they to take the Report of the Miracle upon the Word of the Apostles, who were Parties in the Cause? Our *Divines* may possibly say they ought: But *Infidels* and *Free-thinkers* would cry out against them, for juggling Tricks, and pious Impostures.

These are all Difficulties and hard Questions about the Miracle of Christ's Transfiguration, which our *Clergy*, who are Admirers of the Letter of that Story, are obliged to account for; and I believe it will

will be long enough before they give a proper and satisfactory Answer to many of them.

Let's here then what the Fathers say to this miraculous Story of *Jesus*'s Transfiguration. And it is agreed amongst them, that the whole is but a Type, (58) Prefiguration, and (59) ænigmatical Resemblance of a future and more glorious and real Transfiguration. And whenever they speak of any Part of the Story, they never explain to us how the Matter went upon Mount *Tabor*, but tell us of what *this* or *that* Part of it is figurative and emblematical; and how it is to be understood, and will be fulfill'd in future Time. As thus, by *the* (60) *six Days*, they understand six Ages of the World, after which a real and mysterious Transfiguration will be exhibited to our intellectual Views. By *Moses*

(58) Regni cœlestis Honor prefiguratur. St. *Hilar. in Loc. Matt.* In Transfiguratione futura Regni Præmeditatio & Gloria demonstrata est. St. *Hierom. in Loc. Matt.*

(59) Αἰνιγματώδης παραδειξις της Βασιλειας, Anast. in Transfig. Dom. Τυποδειγμα της δοξης ἐκεινης. St. *Chrysost. in Loc. Matt.*

(60) Sex millium scilicet Annorum Temporibus evolutis. St. *Hilar. in Loc. Matt.* Sic post Sex ætates Dominus a perfectis Famulis conspicietur. *Dionys. Alex. apud Damascen. in Orat. de Transfig.*

and

and *Elias* (61) talking with *Jesus*, they mean the Law and the Prophets, upon an allegorical Interpretation, bearing Testimony unto Christ as the Fulfiller of them. By the (62) *Mountain* on which this future Transfiguration will be exhibited, they understand the sublime and anagogical Sense of the Law and the Prophets. By his *Transfiguration* it self, they mean his taking upon him, and passing through the Forms of all the Types of him under the Law, as of a Lamb, a Lion, a Serpent, a Calf, a Rock, a Stone, and of many others, which he is to fulfil, and which will then be clearly discern'd by us. By the black Cloud (63) that at present obstructs this Vision, they understand the Letter of the Old Testament. By the white (64) Vestments of *Jesus*, they mean the Words of the Scriptures, which will then shine

(61) Et Moses & Elias apparuerunt in Gloria, cum Jesu colloquentes, in quo ostenditur Legem & Prophetas, cum Evangeliis consonare & in eadem Gloria spiritualis intelligentiæ refulgere. *Origen. in Epist. ad Rom.* c. 1.

(62) Montem ascendit ut te doceat, ne quæras eum nisi in Legem & Prophetarum montibus. *Origen in Cantic. Cantic. Hom.* 3.

(63) Per nubem tetram intellige opacitatem Legis. *Damascen. in Orat. de Transfigur.*

(64) Vestimenta candida Jesu sunt Sermones & Scripta Evangeliorum. *Origen in Loc. Matt.*

clear

clear and bright. By the Voice out of the Cloud, they mean, with St. *Peter*, the Word of Prophecy, that will ſound in the Ears of our Apprehenſions. And laſtly, they tell us, that the Way to attain to the Sight of this glorious Viſion, is by aſcending (not by local Motion, but by Reaſon) to the Tops of the Mountain of the myſterious and ſublime Senſe of the Law and the Prophets. If we continue in the Plains and Vallies (65) of the Letter, like the Multitude under the Mountain, we ſhall never ſee *Jeſus* in his ſhining Veſtments, nor how he was transform'd into the Types of the Law, nor *Moſes* and *Elias* talking with him; nor the Law and the Prophets agreeing harmoniouſly in a Teſtimony to him.

After this faſhion do the Fathers, one or other of them, copiouſly treat on every Part of this Transfiguration of *Jeſus*. I could collect an almoſt infinite Number of Paſſages out of their Writings to this Pur-

(65) Si quis Litteram ſequitur, & deorſum eſt totus, hic non poteſt videre Jeſum in veſte candida; qui autem ſequitur Sermonem Dei & ad montana, id eſt, excelſa Legis conſcendit, iſti Jeſus commutatur—Quamdiu Litteram ſequimur occidentem, Moſes & Elias cum Jeſu non loquuntur; ſin ſpiritualiter intelligimus, ſtatim Moſes & Elias veniunt, id eſt Lex & Prophetæ & colloquuntur cum Evangelio. *Johan. Hieroſ. Hom.* 32.

poſe:

poſe: But from theſe few it is plain, they look'd on the Story of Chriſt's Transfiguration, but as a Figure and Parable; and they were certainly in the right on't, in as much as this their Senſe of the Matter, and no other, will ſolve the Difficulties before ſtarted againſt the Letter, as any one may diſcern, if he attentively review and compare one with the other: As, for inſtance, this their Senſe and Interpretation lets us into the Reaſon of *Moſes* and *Elias*'s appearing on the Mount with *Jeſus*; and gives us to underſtand what they talk'd about, and that was, not on *Jeſus*'s *Deceaſe which he would accompliſh at* Jeruſalem, as our Tranſlation has it, but on the Prophecy of the Old Teſtament; particularly, as St. *Luke* ſays, on *Moſes*'s Book of *Exodus, and how he would fulfill it* at the New Jeruſalem.

Whether any, beſides my ſelf, does really apprehend, and is willing to underſtand this Story of Chriſt's Transfiguration, as I do, I neither know nor care. I am not bound to find others Ears, Eyes, and Capacities. What I have ſaid is enough to ſhew the Senſe of the Fathers about this Matter. If any diſlike their concurrent Opinion of *Jeſus*'s Transfiguration's being an Emblem, an Enigma, and figurative Repreſentation of a future and moſt glori-

ous Transfiguration, such a one as they speak of; let him account for the Difficulties and Objections which I have before raised against the Letter of this Story. In the mean time I shall think it, literally, an absurd, improbable, and incredible one, and no other than a prophetical and parabolical Narrative of what will be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by *Jesus*.

And thus I have considered *three* of the Miracles of our Saviour, and shewn how they are Absurdities, according to the Letter, consequently do make nothing for his Authority and *Messiahship*. I can and will do as much by his other Miracles; for I would not have any one think I am gotten to the End of my Tedder, but for some Reasons best known to my self, I publish these Remarks on these three first. After the *Clergy* have chew'd upon these a while, I will take into Examination some others of *Jesus*'s Miracles, which for their literal Story are admired by them. As for Instance,

I will take to task his Miracle (66) *of changing Water into Wine at a Marriage in Cana of Galilee*; which was the beginning of *Jesus*'s Miracles, and should by right have been first spoken to; but I am

(66) *John* ii.

almost

almoſt too grave to handle the Letter of this Story as I ought; and if I had treated it as ludicrouſly as it deſerves, I don't know but at ſetting out, I ſhould have put the *Clergy* quite out of all Temper. I would not now for the World be ſo impious and prophane, as to believe, with our *Divines*, what is contain'd and imply'd in the Letter of this Story. If *Apollonius Tyanæus*, and not *Jeſus*, had been the Author of this Miracle, we ſhould often have reproached his Memory with it. It is ſaid of *Apollonius Tyanæus*, that a Table was all on a ſudden, at his Command, miraculouſly ſpread with Variety of nice Diſhes for the Entertainment of himſelf and his Gueſts; which Miracle, our *Divines* can tell him, makes not at all to his Credit, in as much as it was done for the Service and Pleaſure of luxurious Appetites. But if *Apollonius* had done, as our *Jeſus* did at this Wedding, they would have ſaid much worſe of him; and that, modeſtly ſpeaking, he delighted to make his Friends thoroughly merry, or he would not be at the Pains of a Miracle to turn ſo much Water into Wine, after they had before *well drank*. If the Fathers then don't help us out at the myſtical and true Meaning of this Miracle, ſuch farther Objections may be form'd a-

gainſt the Letter, as may make our *Divines* aſham'd of it.

I will alſo take into Examination *Jeſus*'s Miracle (67) of *feeding many Thouſands in the Wilderneſs with a few Loaves and Fiſhes*; which, according to the Letter, are moſt romantick Tales. I don't in the leaſt queſtion *Jeſus*'s Power to magnify or multiply the Loaves, and, if he pleas'd, to meliorate the Bread: But that many Thouſands of Men, Women, and Children, ſhould follow him into the Wilderneſs, and ſtay with him three Days and Nights too, without eating, is a little againſt Senſe and Reaſon. Whether the Wilderneſs was near to, or far from the People's Habitations, the Difficulties attending the Story are equally great. I wonder how *Jeſus* amuſed them all the while, that they had the Patience to ſtay with him without Food; but I much more wonder, that no Victuallers beſides the *Lad* with his Loaves and Fiſhes, of whom, and his Occupation, whether it was that of a *Baker* or *Fiſhmonger*; and of his Neglect of his Maſter's Buſineſs here; and of the Reaſon that he met with no hungry Chapmen for his Bread before, we ſhall make ſome Enquiry; but particularly why he alone, I

(67) *Matt.* C. xiv. and xv. *&c.*

ſay,

ſay, and no other Victuallers, no other Retalers of Cakes and Gingerbread followed the Camp. In ſhort, for all the imaginary Greatneſs of the Miracle (which there is a way to reduce and leſſen) of *Jeſus*'s feeding his Thouſands with a few Loaves, there muſt be ſome Faſcination or Enchantment (condemn'd by the Laws of the *Jews* as well as of other Nations) in the Matter; or the People, if they had ſtay'd one Day, would not two, much leſs three *to faint*, but would, eſpecially the Women and Children, have been for returning the firſt Night home. We muſt then ſeek to the Fathers (who ſay the five Books of *Moſes* are the *five Barley Loaves*, &c. and the ſeptiform'd Spirit, the *ſeven Loaves*, &c.) for a good Notion of this Miracle, and if they don't make it a Parable; do what our *Divines* can, it will turn to the Diſhonour of the holy Jeſus.

I will alſo conſider the Miracle of *Jeſus*'s (68) *curing the Man ſick of the Palſy, for whom the Roof of the Houſe was broken up, to let him down into the Room where* Jeſus *was, becauſe his Bearers could not enter in at the Door for the Preſs of the People.* This literally is ſuch a *Rodomontado*, that were Men to ſtretch for a Wa-

(68) *Mark* ii. *Luke* v.

ger,

ger, againſt Reaſon and Truth, none could out-do it. Where was the Humanity of the People, and wherefore did they ſo tumultuate againſt the Door of the Houſe? Its *ſtrange* they had not ſo much Compaſſion on the *Paralytick*, as to give way to him: Its *more ſtrange* that his Bearers could get to the Top of the Houſe with him and his Bed too, when they could not get to the Door, nor the Sides of it: Its *yet ſtranger*, that the good Man of the Houſe would ſuffer his Houſe to be broken up, when it could not be long ere the Tumult of the People would be appeas'd: But moſt *ſtrange*, that *Jeſus*, who could drive his Thouſands out of the Temple before him, and draw as many after him into the Wilderneſs, did not, by Force or Perſuaſion, make the People to retreat, but that ſuch needleſs Trouble and Pains muſt be taken for the miraculous Cure of this poor Man. Let's think of theſe Things againſt the Time, that out of the Fathers I prove this Story to be a Parable.

I will alſo take into Conſideration the Miracle of *Jeſus*'s curing *the* (69) *blind Man, for whom Eye-Salve was made of Clay and Spittle*; which Eye-Salve, whether it was balſamick or not, does equally

(69) *John* ix.

affect

affect the Credit of the Miracle. If it was naturally medicinal, there's an End of the Miracle; and if it was not at all medicinal, it was foolishly and impertinently apply'd, and can be no otherwise accounted for, than by considering it, with the Fathers, as a figurative Act in *Jesus*.

I will also take into Consideration the several Stories of *Jesus*'s raising of the Dead; and, without questioning his actual bringing of the Dead to Life again, will prove from the Circumstances of those Stories, that they are parabolical, and are not literally to be apply'd to the Proof of *Jesus*'s divine Authority and Messiahship; or, for Instance, *Jesus*, when he raised *Jairus*'s (70) Daughter from the Dead, would never have turned the People out of the House, who should have been his best and properest Witnesses.

I will also consider the Miracle of *Jesus*'s (71) *cursing the Fig-Tree*, for its not bearing Fruit out of Season; which, upon the bare mention of it, appears to be a foolish, absurd, and ridiculous Act, if not figurative.

I will also consider the (72) Journey of the Wisemen out of the East, with their (literally)

(70) *Mark* v. (71) *Matt.* xxi. *Mark* xi.
(72) *Matt.* ii.

terally) senseless and ridiculous Presents of *Frankincence* and *Myrrhe*, to a new-born Babe. If with their *Gold*, which could be but little, they had brought their *Dozens* of Sugar, Soap, and Candles, which would have been of Use to the Child and his poor Mother in the Straw, they had acted like wise as well as good Men. But what, I pray, was the Meaning and Reason of a Star, like a *Will-a-Whisp*, for their Guide to the Place, where the holy Infant lay. Could not God, by divine Impulse, in a Vision or in a Dream, as he ordered their Return home, have sent them on this important Errand; but that a Star must be taken or made out of Course to this Purpose? I wonder what Communication passed between these Wisemen and the Star, or how they came to know one anothers Use and Intention. But the Fathers shall speak hereafter farther to the Senselessness of this Story literally, and make out the Mystery and true Meaning of it.

I will also, by the Leave of our *Divines*, take again into Consideration the miraculous Conception of the Virgin *Mary*, and the Resurrection of *Jesus* from the Dead. I do believe, if it may so please our *Divines*, that *Jesus* was born of a pure Virgin, and that he arose from the Dead: But speaking too briefly, in the *Moderator*,

Moderator, to these two Miracles, they took Offence. I will therefore give them a Review, and speak home to them; particularly to Christ's Resurrection, the evangelical Story of which literally, is such a Complication of Absurdities, Incoherences, and Contradictions, that unless the Fathers can help us to a better Understanding of the *Evangelists* than we have at present, we must of Necessity give up the Belief of it.

These and many (73) other of the historical and miraculous Parts of *Jesus*'s Life, will I take into Examination, and shew, that none of them literally do prove his divine Authority; so far from it, that they are full of Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities; but that his whole Life in the Flesh, is but (74) Type, Figure, and Parable of his mysterious and spiritual Life and Operations in Mankind.

In the End of this Head, it will be a curious and diverting Subject to examine the Miracles of *Jesus*, as they are literally understood, by the Notions which our

(73) Alia quam plurima his similia in Evangeliis inveniet, quicunque attentius legerit. *Origen. de Principiis*, lib. iv.

(74) Quæ Enarratio erit Evangelii sensibilis, nisi accommodetur ad intelligibile & spirituale? Nulla sane. *Origen. in Præfat. ad Johan. Evang.*

Divines have advanced about Miracles; and to ſhew, that even their Notions compared with Chriſt's Miracles, are deſtructive of his Authority, and ſubverſive of Chriſtianity. This, I ſay, would be a moſt diverting Undertaking, and it will be ſtrange, if ſome *Free-Thinker*, that loves Pleaſure of this kind, does not take the Hint, and ſnatch the Work out of my Hands. If I do it my ſelf, I ſhall have eſpecial Regard to the Writers againſt the *Grounds*, without paſſing by Mr. *Chandler*'s *Eſſay on Miracles*; on which the more Remarks will be made, if it be but to pay my Reſpects to the *Archbiſhop*'s Judgment, and to ſhew my Admiration at thoſe extravagant Praiſes which his *Grace* at *Lambeth* has beſtowed on that Author. Among other his notable Notions of a Miracle (and the *Archbiſhop* ſays he has (75) *ſet the Notion of a Miracle upon a clear and ſure Foundation*) one is, (76) *That Miracles ſhould be Things probable as well as poſſible, that they do not carry along with them the Appearance of Romance and Fable, which would unavoidably prejudice Men againſt believing them.* This

(75) *See Archbiſhop* Wake's *Manuſcript Letter to Mr.* Chandler, *which is handed about Town and Country.*

(76) Chandler's *Vindication*, &c. p. 81.

is

is certainly a good and right Notion of a divine Miracle; and I don't doubt, but according to it, Mr. *Chandler* and the *Archbiſhop* think, they can juſtify the literal Story of our Saviour's Miracles, againſt the Charge of *Fable* and *Romance:* But whether they are able to do it or not, I ſhall go on, in ſome Diſcourſes hereafter to be publiſh'd, to prove that our *Divines*, by eſpouſing the Letter of Chriſt's Miracles, have deceived themſelves into the Belief of the moſt arrant *Quixotiſm* that can be deviſed and palm'd upon the Underſtandings of Mankind. I ſay, they have deceived themſelves; for neither the Fathers, nor the Apoſtles, nor even *Jeſus* himſelf, meant that his Miracles, as recorded in the *Evangeliſts*, ſhould be taken in a literal Senſe, but in (77) a myſtical, figurative, and parabolical one. And this ſhould bring me to the

III. Head of my Diſcourſe; that is, to conſider what *Jeſus* means, when he appeals to his Works and Miracles, as to a Witneſs and Teſtimony of his divine Authority; and to ſhew, that he could not properly and truly refer to thoſe ſuppoſed

(77) Dominus noſter ea quæ faciebat corporaliter, etiam ſpiritualiter volebat intelligi, *&c. Auguſt. Serm.* xcviii. *Sect.* 3.

to be wrought by him in the *Flesh*, but to those mystical ones he would do in the *Spirit*, of which those seemingly wrought by him in the Flesh, are but Types and Shadows.

But this Head can't be rightly spoken to, till I have more amply discuss'd the former, which, by God's Leave, I promise to do: And if my *courteous Readers* will be so kind as to trust me till that Time, I assure them to prove, that no Ignorance and Stupidity can be greater, than the Imagination that *Jesus* really appeal'd to his Miracles, supposed to have been wrought by him in the Flesh, as to a Witness and Testimony of his divine Authority, and *Messiahship*.

In the mean Time our *Divines* may go on in their own Way, if they think fit, and admire *Jesus* of old, and celebrate his Power and Praises for healing of bodily Diseases, and doing other notable Feats according to the Letter of the evangelical Story; but I am for the spiritual *Jesus* and *Messiah*, who cures the worse (78) Distempers of the Soul, and does other mysterious and most miraculous Works, of which, those recorded in the Evangelists,

(78) Quos in corporibus morbos sanavit Christus, hi in animabus existunt, & supernam ejus opem requirunt. *Johan. Nepot. Hierosol.* Hom. LXI.

are

are but Figure and Parable. This is the primitive and concurrent Opinion about the true *Meſſiah*, which the Fathers univerſally adher'd to. Whether our *Jeſus*, at this Day, be ſuch a ſpiritual *Meſſiah* to his Church, or whether ſhe does not ſtand in need of ſuch a one, is the Queſtion that our *Divines* are to ſee to. But I will add here, what I believe, and ſhall have another Opportunity to prove, that God on purpoſe ſuffer'd or empower'd *falſe* as well as *true* Prophets, *bad* as well as *good* Men, ſuch as *Apollonius*, *Veſpaſian*, and many others to cure Diſeaſes, and to do other mighty Works, equal to what are literally reported of *Jeſus*, not only to defeat us of all Diſtinction between true and falſe Miracles, which are the Object of our bodily Senſes, but to raiſe and keep up our Thoughts to the conſtant Contemplation of *Jeſus*'s ſpiritual, myſterious, and moſt miraculous Works, which are the Object of our Underſtandings, and loudly beſpeak the Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs of God, and which are to be the abſolute Demonſtration of *Jeſus*'s divine Authority and *Meſſiahſhip* to the Converſion of *Jews* and *Infidels*.

I have no more to do at preſent, but, like a *Moderator*, to conclude with a ſhort Addreſs and Exhortation to *Infidels* and *Apoſtates*,

Apoſtates, the two contending Parties in the preſent Controverſy. And

Firſt, To *Apoſtates*, I mean the Writers againſt the *Grounds* and *Scheme*. Whether you, *grave Sirs*, who account your ſelves orthodox *Divines*, tho' there is little but Contradiction and Inconſiſtency amongſt you, do like the Name of *Apoſtates* which is given you, I much queſtion: But it is the propereſt, I could think of, for your Deſertion of primitive Doctrine about Prophecy and Miracles. I could, not improperly, have given you a worſe *Title*, but I was willing to compliment you, rather than reproach you with this.

But ſetting aſide the Title of *Apoſtates*, whether it be, in your Opinion, opprobrious or not; you may plainly perceive, that I am, *Sirs*, on your Side, as to the Truth of Chriſtianity; and if you'll accept of my Aſſiſtance for the Proof of *Jeſus*'s Meſſiahſhip from Prophecy, upon the Terms of the allegorical Scheme propoſed in my *Moderator*, you ſhall find me your hearty Abettor. Upon the allegorical Scheme, I don't doubt but we ſhall ſoundly drub and mawl *Infidels*, and beat them out of the Field of Battle. If you, being wedded to the literal Scheme, will not accept of my Aſſiſtance, you may go on in your own Way,

Way, and see the Event of the Controversy, which in the End will turn to your Dishonour.

You, *Sirs*, can't but be sensible, how those two great Generals, Mr. *Grounds*, and Mr. *Scheme*, with their potent Armies of Reasons and Authorities against your literal Prophecies, have grievously distress'd and gall'd you; and, if you don't make an honourable Retreat in Time, and seek to *Allegorists* for Help, will gain a compleat Victory and Triumph over you.

Instead of the Help of *Allegorists*, you, I find, under the Disappointment of your literal Scheme, chuse rather to have Recourse to *Jesus*'s Miracles: But what little Dependance there is upon his Miracles, in your Sense, I have in *part* proved in this Discourse; and this I have done (give me leave repeatedly to declare it) not for the Service of your unbelieving Adversaries, but to reduce you to the good old Way of interpreting Oracles, which, upon the Testimony of the Fathers, will, one Day, be the Conversion of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*.

Whether you, *Sirs*, will be pleas'd with this short Discourse on Christ's Miracles, I much question. But before you put your selves into a Rage against it, I beg of you to read St. *Theophilus* of *Antioch*, *Origen*, St. *Hilary*,

St. *Hilary*, St. *Auguſtin*, St. *Ambroſe*, St. *Jerome*, St. *Chryſoſtom*, St. *John* of *Jeruſalem*, St. *Theophylact*, and other occaſional ancient Pieces on one part or other of the *Evangeliſts*; and you'll find how they countenance ſuch a Diſcourſe as this on Miracles, and will abundantly aſſiſt me in the Proſecution of it.

I expect, *Sirs*, that ſome of you will be ready to rave againſt me for this Diſcourſe; but this is my Comfort, that if your Paſſion ſhould ariſe to another Proſecution of me, you can't poſſibly ſeparate any of mine from the Opinions of the Fathers to ground a Proſecution on: And what Diſhonour in the End will redown to Proteſtant and pretendedly learned *Divines* of the Church of *England*, to perſecute again the Fathers for primitive Doctrine, I deſire you to think on.

But, as I ſuppoſe, you'll have more Wit, *Sirs*, than to proſecute me again for this Diſcourſe; ſo I hope you'll have more Ingenuity, than odiouſly (after your wonted manner) to repreſent me to the Populace, for Profaneneſs, Blaſphemy, and Infidelity. If you diſlike the whole, or any part of this Diſcourſe, appear like Men and Scholars, from the *Preſs* againſt it. Uſe me as roughly in Print as you think fit, I'll not take it ill.

Veniam

Veniam petimus, dabimuſq; viciſſim.

I deſire nothing more than to be furiouſly attack'd from the *Preſs*, which, if I am not much miſtaken, would give me a long'd for Opportunity to expoſe your Ignorance to more Advantage.

Be not longer miſtaken, *good Sirs*. The Hiſtory of *Jeſus*'s Life, as recorded in the *Evangeliſts*, is an emblematical Repreſentation of his ſpiritual Life in the Soul of Man; and his Miracles are Figures of his myſterious Operations. The four Goſpels are in no Part a literal Story, but a Syſtem of myſtical Philoſophy or Theology.

If you are reſolved not to come into this Opinion, I beg of you again, before you break forth into a Paſſion, to try to vindicate the literal Story of the three Miracles ſpoken to in this Diſcourſe, *viz.* thoſe of Jeſus's *driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple; of his exorciſing the Devil out of the Madman; and of his Transfiguration on the Mount*; which if you are able to defend againſt the Fathers, and my Objections, I'll give up the Cauſe to you, and own my ſelf (what I am far enough from being) an impious Infidel and Blaſphemer, and deſerving of the worſt Puniſhment. In the mean time, I make bold again to aſſert, that the literal Story of Chriſt's Life and

Miracles, is an abſurd and incredible Romance, full of Contradictions and Inconſiſtencies; and that modern Paraphraſes are not only a conſequential Reflection on the Intellects of the *Evangeliſts*, and their divine Gifts of the Spirit, as if they could not write an intelligible and coherent Piece of Biography without your Help at this Diſtance of Time; but have even darken'd and obſcured the ſeemingly native Simplicity of the Story of the Life of *Jeſus*. So leaving you to chew upon this, I turn

My Addreſs to *Infidels*, particularly to the two moſt renown'd Writers of the Party, Mr. *Grounds*, and Mr. *Scheme*. I ſhould, *Gentlemen*, by right, ſalute you with the Title of *Free-Thinkers*, a proper Name for your philoſophical Sect, who are for the free Exerciſe of your Reaſon about divine and ſpeculative Points in Theology. And I had diſtinguiſh'd you by this Title from your apoſtatical Adverſaries, but that I had a mind to oblige my old Friends the *Clergy*, in giving you a no more honourable Title than I do them. And I truſt you will not be offended at the Title of *Infidels*, ſince not only your Writings ſeem to have a Tendency to Infidelity; but, if there be any Fault in your Principles, you know how to charge it on your Adverſaries, the pretended Advocates for Chriſtianity, whoſe Abſurdities,

Abſurdities, falſe Reaſonings, Inconſiſtencies, and fooliſh Gloſſes on the Scriptures, have occaſioned your Departure from the Faith in Chriſt.

I thank Mr. *Scheme* for the noble Preſent of his Book, which I received and read with Pleaſure. But inſtead of one, he ſhould have ſent me a *Dozen* for the Uſe of Friends and Borrowers, who are very curious and importunate for the Peruſal of it. For what Reaſon he envies the *Booksellers* the publick Sale of his Work, chuſing rather to give it away *gratis*, than that they ſhould reap any Profit by it, I know not. Surely it is not to bring an *Odium* on the *Clergy* for Perſecutors, as if ſuch an uſeful and philoſophical Piece might not appear publickly without Danger from them: If ſo, I hope the *Clergy* will reſent the Indignity, and invite him to a Publication of his Book, with a Promiſe of Impunity, which would wipe off the Reproach, which this clandeſtine Method of diſpoſing of it has caſt on them.

I once almoſt deſpair'd, *Sirs*, of ſeeing ſuch another Piece from your Quarter. I was afraid the Proſecution of the *Moderator*, would have deterr'd you from the Preſs, whereby our excellent Controverſy on Foot muſt have been drop't: But the ſudden and unexpected Appearance of Mr.

Scheme, has revived me, and rejoiced the Cockles of my Heart. Go on then, *great Sirs*, in this Controverſy, which Mr. *Grounds* happily commenc'd; and if you are deny'd the Liberty of the Preſs, and publick Sale of your Books, I hope you'll, for all that, as occaſion offers it ſelf, oblige the Learned and Curious with ſome more of your bright Lucubrations, tho' you print them, and diſpoſe of them in this clancular and ſubtil Method.

It is not that I wiſh well to your Cauſe of Infidelity, that I thus encourage you. You have more Senſe and Reaſon, than to ſuſpect me tainted with unbelieving Principles. Chriſtianity will ſtand its Ground againſt your battering Armour; and the Church of Chriſt will be the more firmly eſtabliſh'd on a Rock of Wiſdom, for that Oppoſition you make to it. Tho' you will entirely vanquiſh the literal *Schemiſts*, and ride in Triumph over them, yet other Defenders of the Faith, call'd *Allegoriſts*, will ariſe to your Confutation and final Overthrow.

If I am not miſtaken, *Sirs*, your Adverſaries, the literal *Schemiſts*, whom I call *Apoſtates*, are about making a Retreat, and yeilding the Field of Battle to you. The *Biſhop* of *Lichfield*, the greateſt General on their Side, will not only find it hard

hard to levy any more Forces in Defence of his *twelve* literal Prophecies; but he knows that, if he draws his Sword any more againſt you, he muſt attack too the Authority of the Fathers for the allegorical Interpretation of ſome of thoſe Prophecies, already urg'd in my *Supplements* to the *Moderator*; or, if the Fathers are neglected by him; they and I, keeping out of the Reach of his *Bug-Bear*, will treat him with ſuch familiar Language, as never was given to one of his Order.

Mr. *Scheme* ſeems to promiſe us a Diſcourſe on the Miracles in the Scriptures; I hope he'll be as good as his Word, and 'ere long publiſh it. This Diſcourſe of mine can't poſſibly ſuperſede his. As I queſtion not but his Thoughts and Remarks on Miracles will be very conſiderable; ſo I ſhall be a little impatient till I ſee them. But be his Diſcourſe on Miracles of what Kind ſoever, I believe it will hardly be an Obſtruction to my Undertaking in Hand, which I intend, by God's Leave, to go on with, to the Honour of the holy *Jeſus*, our ſpiritual *Meſſiah*, to whom be Glory and Praiſe for ever and ever. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

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LONDON:

Printed for the Author, Sold by him, next Door below the *Star* in *Aldermanbury*, and by the Bookſellers of *London* and *Weſtminſter*. 1727.

[Price One Shilling.]

TO THE

Right Reverend Father in GOD

EDWARD,

Lord Biſhop of LICHFIELD.

MY LORD,

YOUR Fame for that celebrated Book, call'd the *Defence of Chriſtianity*, is the Occaſion of this Dedication. I need not tell you, what vaſt Reputation you have acquir'd by it: You have been not only often applauded from the Preſs, but have met with large Compliments and Thanks from your Clergy for it. And though Mr. *Scheme* has very untowardly written againſt you, yet this is *ſtill* your Ho-

nour, that you are an *Author*, not unworthy of his Regard and Notice.

I am in Opinion with the Fathers, againſt an eſtabliſh'd Hire for the Prieſthood, thinking it of Diſſervice to true Religion: But when I conſider'd the Uſefulneſs of your Lordſhip's Epiſcopal Riches and Honours to this Controverſy, I almoſt chang'd my Mind. Your exalted Station in the Church, has given Credit and Authority to your Work, which, if it had came from the Hands of a poor Prieſt, had never been ſo much admir'd; neither would Mr. *Scheme*, I believe, nor myſelf, have paid ſo many Reſpects to it.

For this Reaſon, I wiſh ſome more of your *Order* would appear in this Controverſy, that the World might ſee what famous Men are our *Biſhops*, and of what Uſe their *Hundreds* and *Thouſands* a-Year are to the Defence of Chriſtianity; which, if ſuch able Hands were not amply hired to its Support, might be in Danger, as certainly as, that Men of low Fortunes muſt needs be Men of poor Parts, little Learning, and ſlender

Ca-

Capacities to write in Vindication of it.

Some have conceiv'd Hopes that the great *Biſhop* of *London*, from his laſt Charge to his *Clergy*, will ſecond you in this Controverſy; if ſo, there's no Doubt on't, but his Performance will be commenſurate to his State and Revenues. Of his Zeal in the Controverſy, he has already given a notable Inſtance, when he proſecuted the *Moderator*; and I dare ſay, he'll vouchſafe us a more remarkable Specimen of his Knowledge in it, as ſoon as he can ſpare Time for't; and then (Oh my Fears!) he'll pay me off for my Objection againſt Chriſt's Reſurrection, which he would have perſuaded the Civil Magiſtrate to have done for him.

But whether the *Biſhop* of *London* ſeconds you or not, it's Time, *my Lord*, to expect another Volume from you, in Anſwer to Mr. *Scheme*, which, for all the Reports that are ſpread of your intended Silence, I hope ſoon to ſee publiſh'd. What will the People ſay, if that *Philiſtin* goes off, giving you the laſt Blow

in

in the Controverſy? Nothing leſs than that he has gotten the better of the learned *Biſhop* of *Lichfield*, and has refuted Chriſtianity to the Conviction of the Biſhop himſelf, who would renounce it too, but for the temporal Advantages he enjoys by it.

Think, *my Lord*, on the Diſhonour of ſuch Reflections, and reſume Courage againſt the Adverſary. I look upon you as a more ſturdy Gladiator than for one Cut on the Pate, to quit the Stage of Battle. Though Mr. *Scheme* has unluckily hit you on a ſoft Place, and weaken'd your Intellectuals for a while; yet he is a generous Combatant, and gives you Time to recover your wonted Strength of Reaſon. At him again then, *my Lord*, and fear not, in your Turn, to give him ſuch a Home-Thruſt, as will pierce his unbelieving Heart.

And when your *Lordſhip* engages him again from the *Preſs*, I hope you'll be more explicite for Liberty of Debate. Through godly Zeal for *Church*, you unhappily made a Slip, in your *Dedica-*

tion

tion to the *King*, on the perſecuting Side of the Queſtion, which had lik'd to have ſully'd the Glory of your whole Work. Such a grand Philoſopher, as you are, ſhould truſt alone to the Goodneſs of your Cauſe, and the Strength of your Reaſonings, in Defence of it: Such a potent Champion for Chriſtianity, as you are, ſhould diſdain the Aſſiſtance of any, but of God to fight for you. The Uſe of the Civil Sword on your Side, is not only a Diſparagement to your Parts, but a Diſgrace to our Religion.

I know not what your *Lordſhip* may think on't, but the Proſecution of the *Moderator* was, in the Judgment of others, more than of myſelf, ſome Reproach to you: becauſe of a few ſlender Animadverſions I made on your renown'd Book, ſome think I ſuffer'd a Proſecution, which you, in Honour, ſhould have diſcourag'd. I am willing to acquit you as much as may be; and would, if I could, impute it to your Forgetfulneſs, rather than your Malice, that you ſtep'd not between me and Danger.

Whe-

Whether this Diſcourſe will be acceptable to your *Lordſhip*, is ſomewhat uncertain; I am afraid it will be a little diſguſtful to your nice and delicate Taſte in Theology, which reliſhes nothing better than the plain and ordinary Food of the Letter of *Chriſt*'s Miracles: But however, you will readily interpret this *Dedication* to your Honour, and if you ſhould make me a large Preſent of Gold for it, I ſincerely aſſure your *Lordſhip*, it will be more than I aim'd at; neither do I deſire any other Return for it, than to be indulg'd the Liberty and Pleaſure to pay my cuſtomary Reſpects to your Writings; and upon proper Occaſions to teſtify to the World how much I am,

My LORD,

The Admirer of your Wit,

Learning and Orthodoxy,

London, Oct. 13th, 1727.

Tho. Woolſton.

A SECOND

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR, &c.

I HERE publiſh another *Diſcourſe* on our Saviour's Miracles, which I am not only oblig'd to, by the Promiſe I made in my former; but am encouraged to it by the Reception which *that* met with. If any of our *Clergy* were, and beſides them, few or none could be offended at my former *Diſcourſe*, they ſhould have printed their Exceptions to it, and, if poſ-

ſible, their Confutation of it, which might perhaps, have prevented me the giving them any more Trouble of this Kind.

In my former *Diſcourſe* I fairly declar'd, that if the *Clergy* could diſprove my Arguments againſt the *Letter*, and for the *Spirit* of the Miracles I there took to task, I would not only deſiſt from the Proſecution of my Deſign, but own myſelf an impious *Infidel* and *Blaſphemer*, and deſerving of the worſt Puniſhment: But ſince they are all mute and ſilent, even in this Cauſe, which in Honour and Intereſt they ſhould have ſpoken out to, they ought not to be angry, if I proceed in it. I have given them Time enough to make a Reply, if they had been of Ability to do it: What muſt I think then upon their Silence? Nothing leſs than that my Cauſe is impregnable, and my Arguments and Authorities in Defence of it irrefragable; and though they don't profeſſedly yield to the Force of them; yet they have nothing to ſay in Abatement of their Strength, or it had certainly ſeen the Light before now.

I go on then in my Undertaking to write againſt the literal Story of our Saviour's Miracles, and againſt the Uſe that is commonly made of them to prove his divine Authority and Meſſiahſhip: And this I do, I ſolemnly again declare it, not for the

the Service of Infidelity, but for the Honour of the Holy Jesus, and to reduce the *Clergy* to the good *old Way*, and the *only Way* of proving his Messiahship, and that is, by the allegorical Interpretation of the Law and the Prophets. Therefore, without any more Preamble, I resume again the Consideration of the three Heads of Discourse, before proposed to be treated on to this Purpose. And they are,

I. To shew, That the Miracles of healing all manner of Bodily Diseases, which *Jesus* was justly fam'd for, are none of the proper Miracles of the *Messiah*, neither are they so much as a good Proof of his divine Authority to found a Religion.

II. That the literal History of many of the Miracles of *Jesus*, as recorded by the *Evangelists*, does imply Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities; consequently they, either in whole or in part, were never wrought, as they are commonly believed now a days but are only related as prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what would be mysteriously, and more wonderfully done by him.

III. To consider, what *Jesus* means, when he appeals to his Miracles, as to a Testimony and Witness of his divine Authority; and to shew that he could not properly and ultimately refer to those, he then wrought in the *Flesh*, but to those mystical ones, which he would do in the *Spirit*, of which those wrought in the Flesh are but mere Types and Shadows.

I have already spoken, what I then thought sufficient to the first of these Heads; and though I could now much enlarge my Reasons, and multiply Authorities upon it to the same Purpose; yet I shall not do it; but only, by Way of Introduction to my following *Discourse*, say, that if it had been intended by our Saviour, that any rational Argument for his divine Authority and *Messiahship* should be urged from his miraculous healing Power; the Diseases which he cured, would have been accurately described, and his Manner of Operation so cautiously express'd, as that we might have been sure the Work was supernatural, and out of the Power of Art and Nature to perform: But the *Evangelists* have taken no such Care in their Narrations of Christ's Miracles. As for Instance, *Jesus* is supposed often

often miraculouſly to cure *Lameneſs*; but there is no Account of the Nature and Degree of Lameneſs he cured; nor are we certain, whether the Skill of a *Surgeon*, or Nature itſelf, could not have done the Work without his Help. If the *Evangeliſts* had told us of Men, that wanted one or both their Legs, (and ſuch miſerable Objects of Chriſt's Power and Compaſſion, were undoubtedly in thoſe Days as well as in ours) and how *Jeſus* commanded Nature to extend itſelf to the entire Reparation of ſuch Defects; here would have been ſtupendous Miracles indeed, which no Scepticiſm, nor Infidelity itſelf could have cavill'd at; nor could I, nor the Fathers themſelves have told how to allegorize, and make Parables of them. But there is no *ſuch* Miracle recorded of Chriſt, nor any thing equal to it; ſo far from it, that the beſt and greateſt Miracles of *Jeſus*, which muſt confeſſedly be thoſe related at large, (for no Body can ſuppoſe he did greater than thoſe more particularly ſpecify'd) are liable to exception being ſo blindly, and lamely, and imperfectly reported, as that, by Reaſonings upon the Letter of the Stories of them, they may be dwindled away, and reduced to no Wonders; which brings me to treat again on the

II.

II. Second Head of my Diſcourſe, and that is, to ſhew, that the literal Hiſtory of the Miracles of *Jeſus*, as recorded in the *Evangeliſts*, does imply Abſurdities, Improbabilities and Incredibilities; conſequently they, in whole or in part, were never wrought, but are only related as parabolical Narratives of what would be myſteriouſly, and more wonderfully done by him.

To this Purpoſe I, in my former Diſcourſe, took into Examination *three* of the Miracles of Jeſus, *viz.* thoſe, of *his driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple*; Of *his exorciſing the Devils out of the Madmen, and ſending them into the Herd of Swine*; and *Of his Transfiguration on the Mount.* How well I perform'd on theſe Miracles, which have been admir'd for their literal Story, let others judge and ſay.

I will now take into Conſideration three others of *Jeſus*'s Miracles, *viz.* thoſe, Of *his healing a Woman that was afflicted with an Iſſue of Blood, twelve Years*; Of *his curing the Woman that labour'd under a Spirit of Infirmity, eighteen Years*; and Of *his telling the* Samaritan *Woman her Fortune of having had five Husbands, and living then in Adultery*

tery with another Man: Which are, all three, reputedly moſt miraculous and admired Stories. The two former, they ſay, are Arguments of *Jeſus*'s mighty Power; and the latter, of his immenſe Knowledge: But how little of certain Power and Knowledge there is in any of them, according to the Letter, will be ſeen in the Sequel of this Diſcourſe. Infidels, I dare ſay, if they had not wanted Liberty, would e'er now have facetiouſly expoſed thoſe Stories. If I ſnatch that Work out of their Hands, our *Clergy* ought to be glad, becauſe what I do in it, is to the Honour of the Holy *Jeſus*, and to turn thoſe pretendedly miraculous Stories into divine Myſteries.

In my former Diſcourſe I gave my *Readers* ſome Reaſon to expect, that in *this* I would treat on ſome of *Jeſus*'s Miracles, which I there mention'd, *viz. On his turning Water into Wine at a Marriage in* Cana *of* Galilee; and *On his feeding of Thouſands with a few Loaves and Fiſhes in the Wilderneſs*; and *On his Cure of the Paralytick, for whom the Roof of the Houſe was broken up to let him down into the Room where* Jeſus *was*, &c. And I then really did deſign to ſpeak to theſe Miracles; but upon Conſideration, finding them moſt ludicrous Subjects according

to

to the Letter, I forbear it at preſent, having no Inclination to put the *Clergy* quite out of all Temper. If any ſhould ſay, this is Fear and Cowardice in me, I can't help it: But, for all that, now I have the *Clergy* in a tolerable good Humour for Liberty, I'll endeavour to keep them in it, and not diſturb them by an haſty and unneceſſary Provocation of them. Who knows not, that the *Clergy*, like an untamed *Colt*, that I have a mind to ride, may be apt to winch and kick, and may give me a Fall before I come at the end of my Journey, to the Diſappointment of my Readers? They ſhall therefore be gently handled and ſtroak'd, till they are a little more inur'd to the Bit and Saddle: And for their Sakes will I poſtpone ſuch Miracles as are moſt obnoxious to Ridicule, and at preſent chuſe the aforeſaid *three*, that of almoſt any in the Goſpel may be moſt inoffenſively treated on. I begin then,

1. To ſpeak to that Miracle of *Jeſus*'s (1) healing a *Woman diſeaſed with an Iſſue of Blood, twelve Years.* To pleaſe our *Divines*, I will allow as much of the Truth of the Letter of this Story, as they

(1) *Matt. Ch.* ix. *Luke, Ch.* viii. *Mark, Ch.* v.

can

can desire. The Fathers themselves, who are for turning the whole History of *Jesus*'s Life into Allegory and Mystery, don't deny that a Woman was cured of an *Hæmorrhage*, after the Manner that is here described by the Evangelists. St. *Augustin* says (2) of this Miracle, *that it was done, as it is related*; and I have a greater Veneration for his Authority, than to gainsay it. But for all that, *Infidels* may and will take into Examination the Nature of this Miracle, and if possible make little or nothing of it. And if I do this for them, it is not to do Service to Infidelity, but to turn Mens Heads to the mystical Use of it, for which it is recorded.

As there is a particular Narration of this Miracle among the few others, that are specified; so Reason should tell us, that if the Letter of the Story of *Christ*'s Miracles, as our *Divines* hold, is only to be regarded, this is one of the greatest that Jesus wrought, or it would not be related by itself, but thrown into the Lump of all manner of Diseases, which He heal'd. And how then shall we come to the Knowledge of the Greatness

(2) Factum quidem est, &, ita ut narratur, impletum. *In Serm.* lxxviii. *Sect.* 7.

of this Miracle? Why, there are but two Ways to it, and they are,

First, By considering the Nature of the Disease, or the lamentable Condition of the Patient before Cure. And

Secondly, By considering the Manner or Means by which the Cure was performed.

If one or both of these Considerations don't manifest the Certainty of a Miracle, *Infidels* may conclude there was none in it.

First, As to the Nature of the Disease of this Woman, we are much in the Dark about it, and very uncertain of what Kind and Degree it was. St. *Matthew* writing of it, says the Woman was αἱμορροοῦσα, that is, *obnoxious to bleeding*; St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* say of her, that καὶ ἐν ῥύσει αἵματος, she was in an Efflux or running of Blood. But neither one nor the other of the *Evangelists* signify of what Degree her *Hæmorrhage* was, nor from what part of her Body it proceeded, nor how often or seldom she was addicted to it. It might be, for ought we know, only a little Bleeding at the Nose, that now and then she was subject to: Or it might be an Obnoxiousness to an Evacuation of Blood by Siege or Urine: Or it was, not improbably, of the

the menſtruous Kind. Any of theſe might be the Caſe of this Woman for what's written; and I don't find that any of our *Divines* have determin'd of what ſort it was. But a great Miracle is wrought, they think, in her Cure, without knowing the Diſeaſe; which *Infidels* will ſay, is aſſerted at Random and without Reaſon, in as much as it is neceſſary to know the Nature of the Diſtemper, or none truly and properly can ſay, there was a great, much leſs a miraculous Cure wrought.

But ſuppoſing this *Hæmorrhage* proceeded from what Part of the Body our *Divines* think fit; How will they make a grievous Diſtemper of it in order to a Miracle? The Woman ſubſiſted too long under her Iſſue of Blood, and bore it too well, for any to make her Caſe very grievous. *Beza* (3) will have it, that it was a conſtant and inceſſant Effuſion of Blood that the Woman labour'd with. But this could not be, nor was it poſſible, as I ſuppoſe *Phyſicians* will agree, for Nature to endure it ſo long, or the Woman to live twelve Days, much leſs twelve Years under it.

No more then, than ſome ſlight Indiſpoſition can reaſonably and naturally be

(3) *On Mat. Chap.* ix.

made of this Woman's Diſtemper. And it would be well, if Infidels would reſt here with their Objections againſt it. But what if they ſhould ſay, that this *Hæmorrhage* was rather of Advantage to the Health of the Patient, than of Danger to her, and that the Woman was more *nice* than *wiſe*, or ſhe would never have ſought ſo much for Help and Cure of it? Some *Hæmorrhages* are better kept open than ſtop'd and dry'd up; and if *Infidels* ſhould ſay, that *this* was a Preſervative of the Life of the Woman, like an *Iſſue*, at which Nature diſcharges it ſelf of bad Humours, Who can contradict them? Nay, if they ſhould ſay that *Jeſus*'s Cure of this Woman's *Hæmorrhage* was a Precipitation of her Death, for ſhe died ſome time after it, rather than a Prolongation of her Life, for ſhe lived twelve Years under it, and was of good Strength, when ſhe applied to our Saviour for Cure, or ſhe could never have born the Preſs of the People to come at him; Who can gainſay them? It is true ſhe was very ſollicitous for a Cure, and uneaſy under her Diſtemper, or ſhe would never have ſpent all ſhe had on *Phyſicians*; which is a Sign, ſome may ſay, that her Diſeaſe was grievous, irkſome, and dangerous, as well as incurable

curable by Art. But *Infidels* will ſay, not ſo; for there are ſome ſlight cutaneous Diſtempers, ſometimes iſſuing with a little purulent and bloody Matter, that nice Women will be at a great Expence for Relief, and are always tampering, and often adviſing about them, though to no Purpoſe: And if they ſhould ſay that this was the worſt of the Caſe of this Woman, Who can diſprove it?

In ſhort then here is an uncertain Diſtemper both in Nature and Degree; how then can there be any Certainty of a Miracle in the Cure of it? Mr. *Moore*, the *Apothecary*, accurately deſcribes the Diſeaſes he pretends to have cured; and he is in the right on't ſo to do, or he could not recommend his Art, and aggrandize his own Fame. So the bodily Diſeaſe of this Woman ſhould have been clearly and fully repreſented to our Underſtanding, or we can form no Conception of Chriſt's Power in the Cure of it. And I can't but think that the *Evangeliſts*, eſpecially St. *Luke* the *Phyſician*, had made a better Story of this Woman's Caſe, if Chriſt's Authority and Power had been to be urg'd from the Letter of it. It's enough to make us think, Chriſt cur'd no extraordinary and

grievous

grievous Maladies, or the *Evangeliſts* would never have inſtanced in this, that ſo much Exception is to be made to. As then, reaſonably ſpeaking, there was no extraordinary Diſeaſe in this Woman cured, and conſequently no great Miracle wrought; ſo let us now,

Secondly, Conſider the Manner of the Cure, and whether any Miracle is to be thence proved. *The Woman ſaid within her ſelf*, (4) *that if ſhe could but touch the Hem of Jeſus's Garment, ſhe ſhould be made whole.* And I can't but commend her, at this Diſtance of Time, for the Power of her Faith, Perſuaſion, or Imagination in the Caſe, which was a good Preparative for Relief, and without which, it's certain, ſhe had continued under her Diſeaſe. The Power of Imagination, it's well known, will work Wonders, ſee Viſions, produce Monſters, and heal Diſeaſes, as Experience and Hiſtory doth teſtify. There being many Inſtances to be given of Cures performed by frivolous Applications, Charms, and Spells, which are unaccountable any other Way, than by the Imagination of the Patient. Againſt the Reaſon and Judgment

(4) *Matt. Ch.* ix. *v.* 21.

of

of a *Phyſician*, ſometimes the diſeaſed will take his own Medicines, and find Benefit. And I don't doubt, but Stories may be told of Cures wrought, the Imagination of the Patient helping, by as mean a Trifle as the Touch of Chriſt's Garments, and no Miracle talk'd on for it. Even in the ordinary, natural, and rational Uſe of Phyſick, it is requiſite, that the Patient have a good Opinion of his *Phyſician* and of his Medicines. A good Heart in the Sick, tends not only to his Support, but helps the Operation of Preſcriptions. As Deſpair and Dejection of Mind ſometimes kills, where otherwiſe reaſonably ſpeaking, proper Medicines would cure; ſo a good Conceit in the Patient at other times, whether the Medicines be pertinent or not, is almoſt all in all. And if Infidels ſhould ſay that this was the Caſe of this Woman in the Goſpel; if they ſhould ſay as St. *John of Jeruſalem* (5) did, *that her own Imagination cured herſelf*; and ſhould urge the Probability of it, becauſe Jeſus could do no Cures and (6) Miracles againſt Unbelief, Who can help it? In this Caſe our *Divines* muſt prove, that this Woman's

(5) Non autem Fimbria Jeſu, ſed ejus Cogitatio eam ſalvam fecit. *In Loc. Marci.*

(6) *Matt. Ch.* xiii. *v.* 58.

Hæmor-

Hæmorrhage was of that kind, that no Faith nor Fancy in herſelf could help her without the Divine Power; but this is impoſſible for them to do, unleſs there had been a more certain Deſcription of her Diſeaſe than the *Evangeliſts* have given of it.

Our *Divines* will indeed tell us, what I believe, that it was the Divine Power co-operating with the Faith and Imagination of the Woman that cured her; becauſe Jeſus ſays *that Virtue had gone out of him* to the healing of her: And I wiſh *Infidels* would acquieſce here, and not ſay, that *Jeſus*'s Virtue hung very looſe on him, or the Woman's Faith, like a Faſcination, could never have extracted it againſt his Will and Knowledge: But what if they ſhould ſay, that *Jeſus*, being ſecretly appriz'd of the Woman's Faith, and Touch of him, took the Hint; and to comfort and confirm her in her Conceit, and to help the Cure forward, ſaid, *Virtue was gone out of him?* This would be an untoward Suggeſtion, which if Infidels ſhould make, our Divines muſt look for a Reply to it.

It is ſaid of the *Pope*, when he was laſt at *Benevento*; that he wrought three Miracles, which our Proteſtant *Clergy*, I dare ſay, believe nothing at all of. But for all that, it is not improbable, but that ſome

ſome diſeaſed People, conſidering their ſuperſtitious Veneration for the *Pope*, and their Opinion of the Sanctity of the *Preſent*, might be perſuaded of his Gift of Miracles, and deſirous of his Exerciſe of it; and if they fancyfully or actually received Benefit by his Touch, I don't wonder, without a Miracle. And what if we had been told of the *Pope*'s curing an *Hæmorrhage* like this before us? What would *Proteſtants* have ſaid to it? Why, "that a fooliſh, "credulous, and ſuperſtitious Woman had "fancy'd herſelf cured of ſome ſlight In-"diſpoſition; and the crafty *Pope* and his "Adherents, aſpiring after popular Ap-"plauſe, magnified the preſumed Cure "into a Miracle. If they would have us "*Proteſtants* to believe the Miracle, they "ſhould have given us an exacter Deſcrip-"tion of her Diſeaſe, and then we could "better have judg'd of it". The Application of ſuch a ſuppoſed Story of a Miracle wrought by the *Pope*, is eaſy; and if *Infidels*, *Jews*, and *Mahometans*, who have no better Opinion of *Jeſus*, than we have of the *Pope*, ſhould make it, there's no Help for it.

And thus have I made my Deſcants on this ſuppoſed Miracle before us, and argued, as much as I could, againſt the Miraculouſneſs of it, both from the *Nature*

of the Diſeaſe, and the *Manner* of the Cure of it. Whether any one ſhall think I have ſaid any thing to the Purpoſe or not, is all one to me. My Deſign in what I have done, is not to do Service to Infidelity, but, upon the Command and Encouragement of the Fathers, to turn Mens Thoughts to the myſtical Meaning of the ſaid Miracle, which I come now to give an Account of.

None of the Fathers (excepting St. *Chryſoſtom* (7), who writes here more like an *Orator* than a *Phyſician*) ever trouble themſelves, when they ſpeak of this Miracle, about the Nature of the Diſeaſe, literally, in this Woman, or the greatneſs of the Cure of it; but alone bend their Studies to the myſtical Interpretation, for the ſake of which, this Evangelical Story was written, and originally tranſacted.

Accordingly, they tell us that this Woman is a Type (8) of the Church of the *Gentiles* in After-times. And as to her *Hæmorrhage* or *Iſſue of Blood*, they un-

(7) In Locum *Matt.*

(8) Illa vero Mulier quæ Fluxum Sanguinis patiebatur, Eccleſiam figurabat ex Gentibus. St. *Auguſt. in Serm.* lxxvii *Sect.* 8. Præparatur igitur Mulier, in cujus Typo univerſalis Eccleſia ſub ſpecie deſignetur. *Paſchaſ. Ratbert. in Loc. Matt.*

derſtand

derſtand it of the (9) Impurity and Corruption of the Church by ill Principles and bad Morals, that ſhe would *flow with*. Some of the Fathers, as (10) *Gregory Nazianzen*, and (11) *Euſebius Gallicanus*, will have the *Iſſue of Blood* to be a Type of the ſcarlet Sin of Blood-guiltineſs in the Church: If ſo, we muſt underſtand it of the Effuſion of Chriſtian Blood by War and Perſecution.

The *twelve Years* of the Woman's Affliction with her *Hæmorrhage* is a typical Number of the Church's impure State for above *twelve Hundred Years*. And whether ſome of the primitive Church did not, by the ſaid *twelve Years* of the Woman, underſtand *twelve Ages*, I appeal to (12) *Irenæus*, to whom I refer my

(9) Hæc Mulier, i. e. Sancta Eccleſia de Gentibus congregata quæ lapſu Criminum deperibat Sancti *Ambroſii in Loc. Luc.* Ut Mulier, quæ fluxum ſanguinis patiebatur, &c. ita omnis Anima percuſſa incurabili Vulnere Peccati, habens fontem pravarum Cogitationum, &c. *Macarii Egypt. in Hom.* xx.

(10) Επηγαζες γὰρ την φοινικην αμαρτιαν. *In Orat.* xl.

(11) Quæ eſt enim hæc Mulier niſi Eccleſia Gentium — Fluxum Sanguinis patiebatur, quia in ſuorum Peccatorum Sanguine verſabatur; quia Sanguinum Rapina & Occiſione nutriebatur. *In Dominic.* xxiv.

(12) Adverſus Hæreſes. *Lib.* I. *Cap.* iii.

Readers. Accordingly this typify'd Woman of the Church, ſhould be the ſame with the Woman (13) in the Wilderneſs, that, as St. *John* ſays, was twelve Hundred and ſixty Days or Years there ſuſtained; and by whom many Proteſtants, as well as the Fathers, underſtand the Church univerſal. When the ſaid twelve Hundred and ſixty Days or Years of the Church's being in the Wilderneſs, did commence or will end, is none of my Buſineſs to enquire or aſcertain. But as this Woman in the Goſpel is ſaid after *twelve Years* Affliction, to be cured of her Diſeaſe by *Jeſus*; ſo it is the Opinion of the Fathers, that the Church univerſal, after *twelve Hundred Years* of her Wilderneſs State, will be purified and ſanctified by the Gifts of the Spirit of Chriſt, and enter upon a more holy, peaceable, and happy Condition, abſolutely freed from her *Iſſue of Blood*, which through Perſecution and War, ſhe has for many Ages labour'd under. It is not my Concern to collect all the Authorities of the Fathers to this Purpoſe; but only ſay, that if at the End of twelve Hundred and ſixty Days or Years, the Church, like the Woman, be not cur'd of her *Hæmorrhage* and myſtical *Wounds* and *Sores*;

(13) *Revel. Chap.* xii. *v.* 6.

if

if her preſent impure and unſound State be not chang'd into an holy, healthy, and peaceable one; many good *Proteſtants*, as well as the Fathers, are miſtaken, and abundance of Prophecies of the Old and New Teſtament, that have been hereunto urged, will loſe their Credit.

But who are meant by the *Phyſicians* of the Woman, that have had the myſtical *Hæmorrhage* and Diſeaſes of the Church under Cure all this while? Who ſhould, but pretended Miniſters, of the Goſpel? Miniſters of the Goſpel are not only by the Fathers call'd metaphorically (14) ſpiritual *Phyſicians*; but our *Divines* and Preachers of all Denominations like the Metaphor, and think themſelves able *Phyſicians* at the Diſeaſes of the Church, which they are forward to preſcribe and apply Medicines to, whenever, in their Opinion, ſhe ſtands in need of them. Whether our *Divines* like to be accounted the *Phyſicians* of the Text before us, I much queſtion; but it is certain that (15) *Euſebius Gallicanus* expreſly ſays,

(14) Excellentes Verbi Prædicatores tanquam magni Medici. —— *Sancti Auguſt. in Pſal.* Lxxxvii. *Sect* 10.

(15) Per hos enim Medicos, Ariolos & Philoſophos intelligere poſſumus, quorum perſuaſionibus cæteri

ſays, that our *Divines* and pretended Philoſophers are meant by them; and venerable *Bede* (16) upon the Place is of the ſame Mind too.

The Woman of the Goſpel is ſaid (17) to *ſuffer many Things of many Phyſicians, and was nothing better'd, but rather grew worſe*; that is, ſhe grew worſe not in Time only, but through the Uſe of her *Phyſicians*, who were her (18) Tormentors. So the Diſeaſes of the Church in Time have increaſed, for all the Uſe ſhe has made of her ſpiritual Phyſicians, *the Clergy*. In every Age has the Church been degenerating in Morals and Principles, as any one knows, that is able to make an Eſtimate of Religion in Times paſt; and all along have her eccleſiaſtical *Quack Doctors* contributed to her ill State of Health. As many Phyſicians with their different Applications tormented the poor Woman; ſo our many *Empericks* in Theology with their different *Schemes* of

cæteri credentes a fidei Veritate aberrantes ad Animæ Sanitatem attingere non valebant. *In Dominic* xxiv.

(16) Per Medicos intellige falſos Theologos. *In Loc. Marci.*

(17) *Mark, Ch.* v. *v.* 26.

(18) Medici Moleſtiam potius quam Sanitatem ægrotanti præbentes. *Ephræm. Syri.* p. 63.

Church

Church Government and various *Syſtems* of Divinity, like ſo many Preſcriptions for Cure, have increaſed the Diviſions, widened the Wounds, and inflamed the Sores of the Church. And if the Woman's *Iſſue of Blood* be, according to the Fathers, a particular Type of the Blood of the Church, that is ſhed in Perſecution and War; our Theological Pretenders to Phyſick, have been ſo far from providing and preſcribing a good *Stiptic* in this Caſe, that they have been the Occaſion of the Effuſion of much Chriſtian Blood; there having been many a War and Perſecution, that theſe *Inciſion* Doctors, who ſhould be all *Balſam*, have been the Cauſe of.

The Woman *ſpent all her Living*, all her yearly Income, upon her Phyſicians, and, as it ſeems, to a bad Purpoſe; ſo very great and large Revenues of the Church, are expended on her Eccleſiaſtical Doctors in ſpiritual Phyſick: And to what End and Purpoſe? Why, to open and widen the bleeding Wounds of the Church, which they ſhould heal and ſalve up. It is now about *twelve Hundred Years*, like the *twelve Years* of the Woman, that the *Clergy*, our Practitioners in Theological Phyſick, have received of the Church vaſt Fees, Stipends and Gratuities (for before that Time her *Doctors* preſcrib'd freely) to take Care of her Health and Welfare;

fare; but unleſs God provide in due Time a Medicine of his own, ſhe is likely to continue in a diſeaſed and ſorrowful Condition for all them.

One would think that the Woman of the Goſpel might have had more Wit than to lay out all ſhe was worth upon *Phyſicians* to no good Purpoſe; one would think that after ſome Experience of their Inſufficiency to cure her, ſhe might have forborn feeing them, and reſerved the Remains of her Eſtate for better Uſes: So the Fees and Revenues of the Church, after due Experience of the Inability of her ſpiritual Doctors to heal her Sores, might have been, in my Opinion, better employ'd, and the Church of Chriſt more out of Danger of Wounds and Sickneſs, by Sin and Error. Certain it is, that many an *Iſſue of Blood*, through Perſecution and War, had been prevented; if ſuch barbarous and blood-thirſty Doctors of Eccleſiaſtical Phyſick, had never been ſo fee'd and hired to take care of the Welfare of the Church, which, for all their Spiritual Medicines, will continue in a languiſhing Condition, till heal'd by the Virtue and Graces of the Spirit of Chriſt, in his foreſaid appointed Time.

So much then to the myſtical Interpretation of the Story of the Cure of the *Iſſue*

Iſſue of Blood in this Woman. Every minute Circumſtance of it is thus to be allegorized, if need was. Whether the *Clergy* will like this parabolical Explication of it, I neither know nor care. They have their Liberty with *Atheiſts* and *Infidels* to believe as little of it as they think fit; and I hope they'll give me Leave with the Fathers of the Church to believe as much of it as I pleaſe. But whether they approve of this allegorical Interpretation of this ſuppoſed Miracle or not; they muſt own, that if the Church, after the foreſaid *twelve Ages*, ſhould be purified and ſanctified; if her Errors and Corruptions, of which the Woman's *Uncleanneſs* is a Type, ſhould be heal'd; if War and Perſecution, typified by her *Iſſue of Blood*, ſhould then entirely ceaſe; if all Chriſtians ſhould then be united in Principle, Heart and Affection, and made to walk in a peaceable and quiet State, as the Woman was (19) *bid to go in Peace*; if the Church ſhould then *come behind* Jeſus (which (20) is a Figure of future Time) and rightly touch by Faith, and appre-

(19) *Mark, Ch.* v. *v.* 34.

(20) Dei Poſteriora ſunt noviſſima tempora. *Origen in Pſal.* xxxvi.

hend his (21) Garments or Words of Prophecy, about which Chriſtians have hitherto been *preſſing* and urgent; and if the Gifts of the Spirit, like *Virtue on the Woman*, ſhould then be poured forth upon the Church to the abſolute Cure of her preſent Diſeaſes, we muſt, I ſay, allow the Story of this Woman to be an admirable Emblem and typical Repreſentation; and the Accompliſhment of it moſt miraculous and ſtupendous; and not only an indiſputable Proof of the Power and Preſence of Chriſt with his Church, but a Demonſtration of his *Meſſiahſhip*, in as much as an almoſt infinite Number of Prophecies of the Old Teſtament, will thereupon receive that Accompliſhment, which hitherto by no Shadow of Reaſon, can be pretended to.

After ſuch a myſtical Healing of the *Hæmorrhage* of the Church, there's no doubt on't, but the Story of this Woman in the Goſpel will be allow'd to be typical and emblematical. In the mean time, without making a Parable of the Story of her, I aſſert, there is little or nothing of a Miracle to be made of her Cure, unleſs we were at a greater Certainty about the

(21) Veſtimenta Jeſu ſunt Sermones & Scripta Evangeliorum. *Origen in Matt. Ch* xvii.

Nature

Nature of her Diſeaſe, and the Manner rationally ſpeaking, of *Jeſus*'s healing of it. And ſo I paſs to the Conſideration of

2. Another Story of a miraculous Cure perform'd by *Jeſus* on another Woman, and that is on her, who (22) *had a Spirit of Infirmity, eighteen Years, and was bow'd together, and could in no wiſe lift up herſelf —— being bound of Satan*, &c. This too, as I ſuppoſe, is with our *Divines* a great Miracle, and one of the greateſt that *Jeſus* wrought, or it had not been ſpecify'd, but caſt indiſcriminately into the Number of all manner of Diſeaſes, which he heal'd. And for the ſake of the Letter, and to pleaſe our *Divines*, whom I would not offend wilfully, I will allow, that *Jeſus* might lay his Hands on, and ſpeak comfortably to ſuch a drooping, ſtooping, and vaporous Woman, full of Fancies of the *Devil*'s Temptation and Power over her; and ſhe might thereupon recover, and be afterwards of a more chearful Heart, and erect Countenance, freed from the whimſical Imagination of being *Satan ridden*: And what of all that? Where's the Mi-

(22) *Luke, Ch.* xiii.

racle? If the Story of such a Miracle had been related of any *Impostor* in Religion, of an *Arch-Heretick*, or *Popish Exorcist*, our *Divines* would have flouted at it; they would have told us, there was nothing supernatural and uncommon in the Event, nor any thing at all to be wonder'd at in it. Taking the *Devil* out of this Story, and there's no more in it, than what's common for a simple, melancholy, and drooping Woman to be chear'd and elated upon the comfortable Advice and Admonition of a reputedly wise and good Man. And the putting the *Devil* into the Story, in another Case, our *Divines* would have said was only the Fancy of the Woman, or the Device of the *Miracle-Monger*, to magnify his own Art and Power. And if *Infidels*, *Jews*, and *Mahometans*, should say so of this Story of *Jesus*, they would be no more unreasonable in their Conjectures and Solutions of this Miracle, than we should have been in another and parallel Case.

The *Pope*, when last at *Benevento*, is said to have exorcis'd a *Dæmon* out of a young Maid, which our *Divines* no more believe than *Infidels* do. But it is not at all impossible or improbable, that a young Woman might be troubled with Vapours, and go dreopingly upon it, whom the holy

holy Father, of whoſe Prayers and Sanctity ſhe had a good Opinion, might relieve with his Talk, and give another Turn to her Thoughts and Temper: And if ſhe fancy'd herſelf before poſſeſs'd with a *Dæmon*, or rather, if the *Pope*'s Partizans perſuaded her ſo, it's not unlikely to make a Miracle on't. Juſt ſo may *Infidels*, with their Deſcants on this Miracle before us, reduce and leſſen it: And what muſt we Believers do then? Why, we muſt find out a Way to aſcertain the Truth and Greatneſs of the Miracle, or give it up. We muſt determine certainly what was the Woman's Diſtemper, and how the Cure of it by ordinary Means was impoſſible, or make no more Words about it.

And how can we come at the Knowledge of this Woman's Diſeaſe, but by the original Words of the *Evangeliſt*. St. *Luke* ſays, ſhe was one πνευμα εχουσα ασθενειας, *that had a Spirit of Weakneſs*, that is, was poor Spirited and puſilanimous; and if ſhe was συνκυπτουσα, *bow'd down* upon't, it's no more than might be expected of a diſconſolate, melancholy and dejected Perſon. Here then is the Diſeaſe of the Woman: If it had been worſe, St. *Luke*, the Phyſician, if he was of Sufficiency in his Art, ſhould better have expreſs'd himſelf; ſo as to give us another

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Conception of it. And if *Satan* had not been brought into the Tale, whom it is eaſy, by reaſonining as above, to exorciſe out of it, here is a no more grievous Diſtemper, than what upon the comfortable Exhortations of a wiſe Man may be cured. And do what our Divines can, they can make literally no more of this Story.

It is ſaid, that for *eighteen Years* the Woman labour'd under this Diſeaſe. And ſhe might be *hippiſh* and *drooping* for a longer time, and be no leſs eaſily at laſt cured. It's pity the *Evangeliſt* had not told us how old this Woman was, when the Diſtemper firſt ſeiz'd her; then we could have made better Conjectures about the Nature and Cure of it. If there was any room to ſuppoſe, either from the Words of Scripture, or extra-ſcriptural Hiſtory, that ſhe was about *fifty* or *ſixty*, when ſhe firſt began to droop, and the *Devil* got upon her Back; here had been Scope for a moſt ſtupendous Miracle; and our *Divines* might have aſſerted, what no Body could have contradicted, that *Jeſus* had made an old Woman, who was *bow'd down*, not only under the Weight of *Satan*, but under the Burthen of ſeventy or eighty Years, young again; and had reſtored her to the Health, Vigor, and Beauty of one of Fifteen. Here would have

have been a mighty Miracle indeed. And I don't doubt, but our *Divines* would willingly get into ſuch a Notion of this Miracle, and would heartily eſpouſe it, but for the Offence they muſt needs give to decrepid old Women, who may be out of Conceit with themſelves upon it, as if they carried the *Devil* on their Shoulders, as the Cauſe of their Decrepidneſs and Incurvity. And ſuch an Offence would be of ill Conſequence.

Reaſonably then ſpeaking, there was not much in the Diſeaſe and Cure of this Woman. Excepting that Part, which *Satan* bears, in the Story, there is nothing wonderful in it. And ſuppoſing *Jeſus* might exorciſe the Devil out of this Woman, or diſmount him from off her Shoulders; yet even this makes nothing for his Divine Power and Authority, in as much as many *Exorciſts* among the *Jews*, and even among *Papiſts*, if Proteſtants, had not more Wit than to believe it, could do as much. And after all, I don't believe the *Evangeliſt* intended, that our Saviour ſhould be had in Admiration for the Letter of this Miracle, or St. *Luke* would accurately have deſcribed the Diſeaſe, ſo as to put it out of the Power of Nature and Art to heal it, and of the Wit of *Infidels* to cavil at the miraculous

Cure

Cure of it. Neither do I find that the Fathers of the Church ever trouble themſelves about the Letter of this Story, which is ſome Argument, that no great Heed is to be given to it; but are only curious about the Myſtery, for which this Miracle was related, and which I come now to give an Account of.

As the Fathers ſaid of the Woman with her *Iſſue of Blood*, that ſhe was a Type of the Church; ſo ſay they of this Woman with her *Spirit of Infirmity*, that ſhe is a (23) Figure of the Church too.

As the Woman was *bow'd together*; ſo the Church, as the Fathers do interpret, may be ſaid to be (24) *bow'd down* to the Earth, when ſhe is *prone* and *bent* to, and *intent on* the literal or earthly Interpretations of the Scriptures; and *can in no*

(23) In Muliere infirma eſt Figura Eccleſiæ. *Theoph. Antioch. in Loc. Lucæ.* Unde intelligitur illa Mulier in Typo Eccleſiæ a Domino ſanata & erecta, quam curvaverat Infirmitas, alligante Satana, *Sancti Auguſt. de Trinit. Lib.* 4. *Sect.* 7. In Typo Eccleſiæ fœminam ſalvat. *Sancti Ambroſ. in Loc. Lucæ.*

(24) Totum Genus humanum tanquam iſta Mulier curvatum eſt ad terram, —— Diabolus & Angeli ejus Animas hominum curvaverunt ad terras, id eſt, ut pronæ in ea quæ terrena, ſuperna non quærerent. *Sancti. Auguſt. in Serm.* cccxcii. Qui occidentem ſequuntur Literam terrena ſapiunt. *Sancti Hieron in Lib. Amos, Ch.* i.

wiſe

wiſe lift up herſelf, like the Woman, *that is*, can't raiſe her Thoughts to the Contemplation of the cæleſtial, ſpiritual, and ſublime Senſe of them. Hence we ſee the Propriety of the Name of the Woman's Diſeaſe, call'd πνευμα ασθενειας, a *Spirit of Weakneſs*, which is not properly ſignificative of any bodily Diſtemper, but ſuccinctly is very expreſſive of the Church's *Weakneſs* at the *Spirit* of Prophecy, which at this Day ſhe labours under.

As it was *eighteen Years* that the Woman was griev'd with her *Spirit of Infirmity*, for ſo long had her Diſtemper been growing on her; ſo it is almoſt eighteen (hundred) Years, or the eighteenth Century of Years, that this *Infirmity* of the Church at the *Spirit* of Prophecy has been coming on her: And ſhe is now ſo *bent* to the Earth of the Letter, that nothing leſs than the Hand and Power of Jeſus, that erected the Woman, can raiſe her to myſtical, divine, and ſublime Contemplations on the Law and Prophets. St. *Auguſtin* (25) will have theſe eighteen *eighteen Years* of the Woman's *Infirmity*, as

(25) Quid illa Mulier octodecem Annos habens in Infirmitate. Sex Diebus Deus prefecit opera ſua. Ter ſeni decem & octo faciunt Quod ergo ſignificavit triennium in Arbore, hoc octo decem Anni in illa Muliere. *In. Serm.* cx.

ſhe is a Type of the Church, to be ſynchronical with the (26) *three Years* of the Fig-Tree's Unfruitfulneſs. I don't rightly apprehend his myſtical Arithmetic. But this is certain, upon the Authority of the Fathers, that thoſe two Numbers, with the *twelve Years* of the Woman's *Iſſue of Blood*, are all conterminous, and will end together: Conſequently at the ſame time, that the Woman of the Church will be cured of her *Iſſue of Blood*, ſhe will be heal'd of her *Infirmity* at the *Spirit* of Prophecy; *that is*, at the Concluſion of certain grand Periods of Time, ſhe will enter upon a bleſſed State of *Peace* and *Viſion*; which is the concurrent Doctrine of the Fathers, as any one may diſcern, that has dip'd into them, and is a good Confirmation of our preſent Expoſition, and myſtical Application of the miraculous Story before us.

St. *Luke* ſays, that the Woman could not lift up herſelf εις το παντελες, *v.* 11. which, without animadverting on our *Engliſh* Tranſlation, ſhould be rendered, *until all was perfected*, or until the *Perfection of Time*, which, the Apoſtle (27) and the Fathers agree, is the Time for the Church to be cured of her *Weakneſs*, and to be

(26) *Luke*, *Ch.* xiii. 7.
(27) 1 *Cor. Ch.* xiii. 9, 10.

endu'd

endu'd with *Power* at the Spirit of Prophecy.

As the Woman was heal'd by *Jeſus* on the Sabbath-Day; ſo the Church, upon the ample Authorities of the Fathers, which Men of Reading will excuſe me the Production of, is certainly to be heal'd of her *ſpiritual Infirmity*, at the Underſtanding of Prophecy againſt the myſtical and (28) grand Sabbath, which, according to the Fathers, commences at the Expiration of her eighteen (hundred) Years *Weakneſs*.

But the *Ruler of the Synagogue is ſaid to be moved with Indignation*, *ver.* 14. at this charitable Work of *Jeſus*, in healing of the Woman, becauſe it was done on the Sabbath-Day; which in my Opi-

(28) Ut Deus ſex Dies in tantis Rebus fabricandis laboravit; ita & Religio ejus & Veritas in his ſex millibus Annorum laboret, neceſſe eſt, malitia dominante & prevalente. Et rurſus, quoniam perfectis operibus requievit Die ſeptimo, eumque benedixit; neceſſe eſt, ut in fine ſexti milleſſimi Anni Malitia omnis aboleatur e terra & regnet per Annos mille juſtitia; ſitq; tranquilitas & requies a Laboribus, quos Mundus jamdiu perpeſſus eſt. *In Lanctant. Inſtit. Lib.* VII. *Ch.* xiv. Dies ſeptimus etiam nos ipſi erimus quando (Chriſti) Benedictione & ſanctificatione fuerimus pleni & refecti; ibi vacantes videbimus, quoniam ipſe eſt Deus. *Sancti Auguſt. de Civit. Dei. Lib.* XXII. *Ch.* xxx.

nion, can't be literally true : Though I am willing enough, to pleaſe our *Divines*, to allow as much as may be of the Letter of this Story, yet I except againſt this Part of it. *Origen* ſays, there are ſome Things of the Goſpel related as Facts, which were not done; and I believe this of the Ruler of the Synagogue to be one of them. Human Nature, I think, is not capable of ſuch baſe and unnatural Reſentment. Works of Neceſſity, and requiſite Offices of Kindneſs and Charity to Man and Beaſt, were allow'd by the Law, and practiſed by the *Jews* on the Sabbath: And the Cure of this Woman, though on the Sabbath-Day, was ſuch an Act of Beneficence and Compaſſion in the Holy *Jeſus*, that I can't but think *bad*, as well as *good* Men, would rather glorify God, that had given ſuch Power unto Man, than find fault with it. But in the Myſtery of this Part of the Story, there is clear Senſe and Truth. Who then is this *Archiſynagogus*, or Ruler of the Synagogue, that will be full of Indignation at the healing of the Church of her foreſaid *Infirmity* at the *Spirit* of Prophecy? *Origen* ſays that the (29) right Interpretation of

(29) Contemnenda non eſt accurata circa Nomina Diligentia ei qui voluerit probe intelligere ſacras Literas. *In Johan. Evang. Tom.* 8.

the

the Names of Perſons and Places in Scripture is of good Uſe to the myſtical Application. Accordingly *Archiſynagogus* does ſignify the *Chiefs of our Congregations:* And who ſhould they be then but the Clergy? And if this ben't enough to fix this Name and Character upon them, then let *Theophanes Cerameus* ſpeak here, who ſays, that the *Archiſynagogus*, is a (30) *Type of all Prieſts*, who will be againſt the foreſaid miraculous Healing of the Church. And why will the *Clergy* be mov'd with Indignation at the curing the Church of her *Infirm*, and reſtoring her to a *ſound* Spirit of Prophecy? Becauſe as St. *Auguſtin* ſays, (31) they are not only *bow'd down* to the Letter themſelves; but becauſe this *Infirmity* of the Church will be a Reproach to them, in as much as it is a Proof of their Apoſtacy and Inſufficiency at Prophecy; and the Cure of it will be attended with ſuch Conſequences, as affect their Reputation and Intereſts. Who can queſtion but the *Clergy*, who are the *Archiſynagogus* of the Text, and who are for the Church's *bending* and

(30) Jam Archi Synagogus adumbrat omnes Sacerdotes, &c. *In. Hom.* xii.

(31) Caluminabantur autem erigenti, qui, niſi curvi? *In Serm.* cccxcii.

ſtooping

ſtooping to the low Senſe of the Letter of the Scripture, will be averſe to her being rais'd, *lifted up*, and erected to the Contemplation of the ſublime, anagogical, and heavenly Senſe of it? Such an Healing and Erection of the Church will vex them at the Heart, as it will bring *Shame* and Loſs of Intereſt along with it; and they will undoubtedly be *Adverſaries* to this good Work of *Chriſt*, which, upon the Teſtimony of all Antiquity, is to be done on or againſt the Evangelical and great Sabbath.

Our Saviour is ſuppoſed to reprove the *Ruler* of the *Synagogue*, for his *Indignation* at the Cure of the Woman on the Sabbath-Day, ſaying, *v.* 15. *Thou Hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath looſe his Ox or his Aſs from the Stall, and lead him away to Watering? And ought not this Woman to be loos'd from this Bond on the Sabbath-Day?* There is Force in this Argument according to the Letter: And the *Ruler* of the *Synagogue*, and other *Jeſus*'s Adverſaries hereupon, might well be *aſham'd* for finding Fault with ſuch a merciful and beneficent Work done on the *Sabbath*; when they themſelves did Works on the *Sabbath* of much leſs Conſequence. But to

(32) the Myſtery. What may be ſaid to our Miniſters of the Letter, of whom the *Archiſynagogus* is a Type, for their Averſeneſs to the healing of the Church in like manner? Why, that they are *Hypocrites*, that is, ſuperficial Criticks on the Scriptures, and don't conſider that *the Law is ſpiritual*, and how againſt the Evangelical Sabbath every Man is to be releaſed from his Bondage and Servility to irrational Principles (for which he has been like an *Ox* and an *Aſs*) and to be conducted to drink of the Waters of Divine Wiſdom: For this grand Sabbath will be a Day of abſolute Liberty, perfect *Reſt*, immenſe Knowledge, real Viſion and Contemplation on God and his Providence, as the antient *Jews* and Fathers ſo copiouſly declare, that they who are ignorant herein, may be *aſhamed*; conſequently they might know, that the Church is to be cured of her *Spirit of Weakneſs* at Prophecy on that Day.

But *Satan* is ſaid to have *v.* 16. *bound*, and, as is ſuppoſed, *bow'd down* this Woman; the literal Truth of which I much

(32) Sed neſciebat Archi Synagogus vel hoc vel illud multo excellentius ſacramentum, quod Sabbato curando Dominus intimabat, quia ſcilicet poſt ſex hujus ſeculi Ætates perpetuæ Vitæ immortalis erat gaudia daturus. *Venerab. Bed. in Lcc.*

queſtion:

queſtion: But how then has *Satan bound and bow'd down* the Church: This, ſeemingly, is the great Difficulty in the myſtical Application of this Story, and muſt be the great Curioſity of my Readers to know how I will account for it. If the Fathers don't help me out at this dead Lift, and that clearly and intelligibly too, I ſhall abate of my Veneration for them. If they don't tell me, and make me to apprehend, what this *Satan* is, that for many Ages has *bound* and oppreſs'd the Church after the ſuppoſed Manner of the typical Woman, I had better have held my Peace, and ſaid nothing to this parabolical Miracle.

The Writings of the *Evangeliſts* ſo abound with Stories of *Satan*, *Belzebub*, the *Devil*, and of greater and leſs Number of *Devils*, and of *Dæmons*, and of *unclean Spirits*, more than any Hiſtories before, as one would think, if theſe Stories were literally to be underſtood, that was the Age in which Chriſt came, that *Hell* firſt broke looſe, and then primarily infeſted Mankind; and that upon the Deſtruction of *Judæa*, and Propagation of the Goſpel, the *Devils* accompanied the *Jews* in their Diſperſion, or the *Apoſtles* in their Travels, and have been the Tempters,

Tempters, Seducers, and Tormentors of other Nations ever ſince.

Arnobius (33) ſays, *That before Chriſt, Devils were things unknown to the World*; by which *Arnobius* muſt mean, either that they were hardly talk'd of before, or that their Nature was not underſtood, till Chriſt inform'd us of it. In both theſe Senſes, I believe, *Arnobius* may be taken, *viz.* that there was not only little Talk of *Satan* and the *Devil*, but leſs of his Nature apprehended, before *Chriſt* by his Parables and parabolical Miracles, rightly interpreted, inſtructed us in it. And if after Ages have departed from the true and original Doctrine of *Devils*, making a literal Story of that, which is only myſtical and cabaliſtical; and have formed to themſelves *Ideas* of hideous and horrible Fiends, *Mormos* and *Hobgoblins*, it ſhall not diſturb me:

As to the Place and State of *Hell*, many are the Notions of *Divines* of ſeveral Ages paſt, as well as of the preſent. I ſhall not recount them all here, much leſs refute any of them. But there is an antient, rational, and cabaliſtical Notion of Hell, which I have learned of the Fathers, who ſignify, that the *Babyloniſh*

(33) Ante Chriſtum in cogniti & a ſolo ſciente detecti. *In Lib* II. *adv. Gentes.*

and bewilder'd State of Christ's Church may be call'd *Hell*, because, as the Word ἄδης does import, it is a State *without Vision*. Hence *Origen* says, (34) that whoever can form to himself an *Idea* of the Church in time to come, when she will be dignified with the Title of the *New Jerusalem*, for her Peace and Vision, may understand what is meant by *Hell*, and all that is written of it.

As then the Fathers had a cabalistical Notion of *Hell*, which modern *Divines* are Strangers to; so they had of *Satan*, and the *Devil* and his Angels. I own myself at a Loss for an express Testimony out of the Fathers about *Satan* in the Text before us; but according to their Explications of *Satan* in other Places, nothing more is meant by him here than, "That furious Principle and Temper in "Man, that is not only averse to Liberty "in Religion, but for binding, restraining, "and tying down the Church and Christian People to certain Opinions and "Ways of Worship." In such a State of Bondage has the Woman of the Church been kept, by such a *Satan*, in one Order of Men

(34) Consequens autem est ei, qui cognoscit quæ sit Hierusalem in divisione veræ Hæreditatis filiorum Israel, ut intelligat Sermonem de Gehenna. *In Matt. Ch.* xxiii.

or

or other, for all Ages paſt. And that this is a right and primitive Notion of *Satan*, I could prove by Authorities enough. *Origen* tells us (35) of the Names of Kings in prophetical Scripture, which would be Enemies to Chriſt's Church; but ſuch Kings never did, nor would perſonally exiſt; their Names, according to Interpretation, ſtanding only for ſo many Sins and Vices, reigning in Mankind. To the ſame Purpoſe he ſays, (36) *human Vices are Devils:* And *Satan* himſelf, (as the Word ſignifies *Adverſary*) is with him (37) and the antient *Jews* too, no other than an *Averſeneſs* in Man to the Will of God. I could quote other Fathers to this Purpoſe; but being ſparing of my Pains at preſent, I refer

(35) Ego puto quod nomina hæc Scriptura divina non pro Hiſtoria narraverit ſed pro Cauſis & Rebus, —— non enim tam Regum quam Vitiorum Nomina, quæ regnant in hominibus referuntur. *In Numer. Ch.* xxxi.

(36) Quid ergo mirum videtur, ſi per ſingula genera Peccatorum ſinguli Dæmones aſcribuntur. *In Lib. Joſu. Ch.* xi.

(37) Sed in alio quodam Libello, qui apellatur Teſtamentum duodecem Patriarcharum, talem quendam ſenſum invenimus, quod per ſingulos peccantes, ſinguli Satanæ intelligi debeant. Evidentius autem & ipſa Nominis ejus interpretatio hoc idem ſignificare videtur; *Satanas* namq; Adverſarius dicitur. Omnes ergo qui adverſantur dei voluntati, Satanæ poſſunt dici. *Ibid.*

my Readers to my former (38) *Discourse*, in which they will see the Opinion of the Fathers about the *Devils* in the Madman, and afterwards in the Herd of Swine; from which let them judge, whether the Fathers could have any other Notion of *Satan* here, than what I have represented. It is certain, and may be easily prov'd, that by *Satan*, the *Dragon* and the *Devil*, mentioned in the *Revelations*, nothing more is to be understood, than a furious, persecuting, satanical, and diabolical Temper in Man; and if what St. *John* writes of *Satan* be cabalistical and allegorical; the other Assertions of the Evangelists and Apostles about *him* will of Course come under that Denomination; or the primitive Rule of Interpretation of Scripture according to the natural Signification of the Names of Persons and Places is not good.

As then the *Woman* of the Gospel was, as is supposed, *ver.* 16. *bound by Satan*, *loe*, *for eighteen Years*; So the foresaid furious Principle in Man, which is a mystical *Satan*, an *Adversary* to Liberty, has bound the Church, *loe*, to the *eighteenth* Century of Years: But she is to be entirely released from this spiritual Bondage,

(38) On Miracles, *p.* 36.

and

and ſet at (39) *perfect Liberty* againſt the acceptable and Evangelical Sabbath. And here it is to be noted out of St. *Auguſtin*, and moſt worthy of Obſervation it is, that at the (40) ſame time, in which the Church will be looſed from her Bondage; *Satan* himſelf will (41) be *bound* and *chain'd* for a (42) *thouſand Years*, the time of the evangelical Sabbath, that is, ſays *Ephræm Syrus* (43) for ever. And how will our myſtical *Satan* or the *Dragon* be bound and chain'd? Not with Chains or Links of Iron or other Metal; but *Vinculis Rationis*, with the Chains of Reaſons and Arguments for Chriſtian Liberty, which will reſtrain the *Adverſary*, *Satan*, from any more Impoſitions and Perſecutions of the Church. And I can't here but applaud the great

(39) Quamdiu vera Pax veniat, & Sabbatiſmus, & Septem decadarum Numerus. —— Eccleſia non plenam recipiat Libertatem. *Sancti. Hieron. in Zechar. Ch.* i.

(40) Illa Mulier curvata intelligitur figurare Eccleſiam, quam *in Sexta Mundi Ætate* a Captivitate Diaboli Jeſus liberabit. *In Quæſt.* 25. *Dialog.* lxv *Quæſt.*

(41) Vidi Angelum habentem Clavem & Catenam ad ligandum draconem. —— *In Sexto Annorum Millenario* hæc Res agitur. *De Civit. Dei. L.* XX. *Ch.* vii.

(42) *Revel. Ch.* xx. *v.* 2.

(43) Propter Infinitatem Annorum Mille Annos dixit. *In Serm. de Pœnitentia.*

Mr.

Mr. *Grounds* and Mr. *Scheme*, for their Work and Labour of Love to Mankind, in making *Chains* of Argumentations for Liberty, which I hope will prove of ſufficient Strength to bind *Satan*, and reſtrain him (in Dr. *Rogers*, Biſhop *G—bſ—n*, and others his Angels) from giving any more Moleſtation to Chriſtian Philoſophers in their Enquiries after, and Lucubrations on Divine Truth. All the Honour that I aim at in that Work is, by the Help of the Fathers, to point out that Anti-Chriſtian Principle or Temper in the *Clergy* (44) which, for its *Averſeneſs* to Liberty, is called *Satan*; for its *Calumnies*, is called the *Devil*; for its *Furiouſneſs*, is called the *Dragon*; and for its *Unreaſonableneſs*, is called the *Beaſt*, to the intellectual Views of Mankind, and to direct them how to apprehend and lay hold on it.

Our Saviour, according to *Origen*, had never call'd *Peter*, (45) *Satan*, if *Satan* had been any thing elſe than *Man-averſe* to the Will of God.

And thus have I ſpoken to the Miracle of *Jeſus*'s healing the *Woman of her Spirit of Infirmity*, *whom Satan had bound*

(44) Diaboli Formam aſſumimus — Leonis Perſonam induimus & Draconis, — quando erudeles & callidi ſumus. *Origen. in Luc. Hom.* viii.

(45) *Mark*, *Ch.* viii. *v.* 33.

an

and bow'd down, which, according to the Letter, is no Miracle at all; and ſome Parts of the Story are improbable and incredible; but the myſtical Completion of it will be moſt prodigious, and a Demonſtration not only of Chriſt's Power and Preſence in his Church, but of his *Meſſiahſhip*, in as much as a vaſt Number of Prophecies of the *Old Teſtament*, more than can ſoon be collected to this Purpoſe, will thereupon receive their Accompliſhment. And ſo I come to a

3. *Third* miraculous Story of *Jeſus*'s, that is of his telling (*John* iv.) the Woman of *Samaria* her Fortune, *of having had five Husbands, and being then an Adultereſs*, &c. in which there is a notable Miracle diſplay'd, in the Opinion of our *Divines*, that proves *Jeſus*'s Omniſcience, or he could not ſo have ſearch'd into the Heart of this Woman, and told her ſuch Occurrences, that concern'd her Life paſt. I thought once of tranſcribing here entirely this Story; and ſo I would, but that it is a long one, and might have ſet ſome Readers, who are by this time awaken'd to pry into the Abſurdities of the Letter, a laughing, before I had time my ſelf regularly to animadvert on it.

Whether

Whether there was any Truth at all in the Letter of this Story, I ſhould much have queſtioned, but that ſome Fathers write of it, as if they believed it literally, tho' they make a myſtical and allegorical Explication of the whole and every part of it. And I, having a ſincere Veneration for the Fathers, will not contradict them, (and I hope this Conceſſion will pleaſe the *Clergy*) but, for all that, can't like any part of this Story literally, but could almoſt wiſh, that the Fathers, for the Honour of *Jeſus*, had made the whole no other than a Parable.

It's ſtrange, that no *Jews* or *Infidels* have as yet ludicrouſly treated this Story to the, almoſt, Confutation of our Religion. If their Tongues had not been ty'd by the aforeſaid *Satan* or *Adverſary* to Liberty, I can't think but they muſt have made ſome pleaſant Animadverſions upon it before now. If ſuch a broken, elliptical, and abſurd Tale had been told of any other Impoſtor in Religion; the Wits of our *Clergy* had been at work to expoſe it plentifully; and indeed there's no need of much Wit to make this Tale nauſeous and ridiculous to vulgar Underſtandings.

I ſhall not myſelf here make all the Remarks I can to the Diſadvantage of this Story: I am not as yet ſo diſpoſed to make

Scoffers

Scoffers and *Infidels* laugh at the *Clergy* for their Adherence to the Letter of it. All I ſhall do now, is to make my Obſervations on the two Uſes, that the Clergy very ſeriouſly put this Story to, and they are,

Firſt, To prove the Expectation that there was amongſt the *Samaritans*, of a *Meſſiah* to come; And

Secondly, To prove *Jeſus*'s Omniſcience, or he could not have enter'd into the Heart of the Woman, and told her, that ſhe had had five Husbands, and was then an Adultereſs. To theſe two Purpoſes, I find this Story urged by our *Divines*, and I muſt needs ſay, as to the

Firſt of them; it is rightly from hence aſ[illegible]d by the (46) *Biſhop* of *Lichfield* and others, that the *Samaritans* had an Expectation of a *Meſſiah*: But why then did not the *Biſhop* and others, who are now in Queſt after Arguments of *Jeſus*'s Meſſiahſhip, prove him hence to be the *Meſſiah*, becauſe he told the *Samaritan* Woman her Fortune? If this was a real and ſubſtantial Argument to her of *Jeſus*'s *Meſſiahſhip*, it ought to be urged by the Clergy at this Day. The Controverſy about *Jeſus*'s Meſſiahſhip is now on Foot;

(46) Defence of Chriſtianity, *p.* 8.

Why do the Advocates for it overlook this Proof of it? Why, becauſe, as I ſuppoſe, they are aware that *Infidels* would make Sport with it. But if *Jeſus*'s telling the Woman her Fortune was no real and concluſive Argument of his being the *Meſſiah*; St. *John* has told us an impertinent Tale of a ſimple Woman, upon whoſe Credulity and falſe Notions *Jeſus* palm'd himſelf as the true *Meſſiah*; and whether he did not ill thus to banter and deceive the Woman, let any one judge.

But let us here behold the Difference amongſt the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, as to the Expectation of a *Meſſiah*. Some of the old *Jews*, like the Apoſtles, expected the *Meſſiah* would be a temporal Prince, a great Warriour and Conqueror of the World. Others (47) of them, like the Fathers, expected he would be a Prophet like *Moſes* in all Things, and deliver his

(47) Doctioribus inter Judæos notiſſimum eſt, ——quod Moſes qui primus fuit Salvator Iſraelis etiam in omni Vita & Operibus ſuis fuetit Typus & Figura ultimi Redemptoris. *Chriſtian. Meyer de Gen. Chriſti*, p. 145. Judæi Veteres expectabant ſimilem Ægyptiacæ Liberationem, ut ſcilicet Pharaoh & omnis ejus Exercitus qui per 430 Annos Populum Dei Captivum tenuit, in Mari Rubro ſubmerſus eſt; ſic etiam Romani qui eodem Annorum Numero Judæos poſſeſſuri, Ultione Domini deleantur. *Sancti Hieron. in Joel. Ch.* v.

People

People out of another *Egypt*: But here the *Samaritans* expected he would be a *Conjurer* and *Fortune teller*; or there is no Senſe in what the Woman ſaid to the Men of the City, *v.* 29. *Come and ſee a Man that has told me all that I have done*, particularly my Fortune of having had five Husbands, and being now an Adultereſs, *Is not this the Chriſt?* What could ſhe mean, but that the *Meſſiah* would be a ſtroling *Fortune-teller*, to inform People of the Events of their Lives paſt and to come? And *Jeſus* to humour the Woman in her Conception of himſelf and of the *Meſſiah*, ſays to her, *v.* 26. *I that ſpeak unto thee, am He.* Whether our *Divines* like *Jeſus* the better for this Story of him literally, I can't tell; but I am ſure they diſlike the Fortune-telling Trade at this Day in others, and believe it to be all Fraud, and are for puniſhing ſtroling *Gypſys* for Cheats, who practiſe it; and in the laſt Age were intent on the (49) Proſecution of judicial Aſtrologers, who pretended to it: And if antient Hiſtory had furniſh'd us with an Inſtance of the Puniſhment of a pretended *Fortune-teller* in the Reign of *Tiberius*, they could not have found Fault with it. Whether any Accuſations were laid a-

(49) See the Life of *William Lilly*.

gainſt *Jeſus* for ſuch his Deluſions of the People, we know not. Evangelical Hiſtory is ſilent, or the *Evangeliſts* have prudently ſuppreſſed it. But I much wonder, that our *Gypſys*, from this Story, don't account themſelves the genuine Diſciples of *Jeſus*, being endu'd with the like Gifts, and exerciſing no worſe Arts, than he himſelf practiſed.

If the *Samaritans* did not expect the *Meſſiah* would be a *Fortune-teller*; how came the Thought into the Woman's Head, that *Jeſus* was the *Meſſiah*, becauſe he had told her, her Fortune? What can our *Divines* ſay to it? Why, they muſt either ſay, that his telling the Woman her Fortune was a real Proof of his *Meſſiahſhip*; or that the Woman was fooliſh and credulous, and drew a falſe Concluſion; and, if ſhe had not been an impudent and graceleſs Whore, would have gone away bluſhing, and never have divulg'd, as the Text ſuppoſes ſhe did, her Shame to the Men of *Sychar*, who too had but little Wit, or they had never ſtir'd from their Homes, to ſee ſuch a Fortune-teller upon the Report of a poor Whore.

But the Men of the City had their Fortunes too told them by *Jeſus*, and they concluded him to be the *Meſſiah* upon it; or there is no Senſe in what they *v.* 42. *ſaid*

to

to the Woman, Now we believe, not becauſe of thy Saying, for we have heard him ourſelves, and know that this is indeed the Chriſt: What could they hear, but their Fortunes, as the Woman had before? And if *Jeſus*, whoſe Ability at all fair Queſtions in the magic Art I don't queſtion, did tell them their Fortunes; I hope he had more Prudence than to talk to them in common of their Fornications and Adulteries, which might occaſion domeſtick Jarrs, and the Breach of good Neighbourhood amongſt them; but if he directed any of them to find their loſt Cattle, and help'd them again to their ſtolen Goods, he did well, and they alone did amiſs, to conclude thereupon, *that he was indeed the Chriſt.* Let our *Divines* now judge whether I have not made a natural and excellent Comment on this Part of the Story, which relates to the Expectation and Opinion, which the *Samaritans* had of a *Meſſiah* to come. But,

Secondly, From this Story literally our *Divines* prove *Jeſus*'s (50) Omniſcience; and *Cardiognoſtick* Power to tell what was in the Hearts and Thoughts of Man. But how ſo? Is it becauſe he told a Woman, that ſhe was an Adultereſs, and had had

(50) See Dr. *Hammond* on the Place.

five

five Husbands? Where's the Conſequence? *Duncan Campbel*, and other *Moorfields*-judicial-Aſtrologers have done greater Feats at Conjuration than *this*, and never were thought to be Omniſcient. And for any Thing appears in this Story of our Saviour, it might be all Cheat and Fraud in him. If *Infidels* ſhould aſſert it, our *Divines* could not diſprove it. If they ſhould ſay, it was poſſible for *Jeſus* to get Intimations of theſe and other Circumſtances of the Woman's Life, before he attempted to tell her, her Fortune; we can't ſay, that this is an impious and unreaſonable Suggeſtion, ſince it is the common Subtilty of deluſive Fortune-tellers, to get what Intelligence they can by Inſinuations and Informations, before they utter their Oracles, and ambiguous Reſponſes to ſimple poor Folks. And there is one Circumſtance in this Story, that looks very ill upon *Jeſus*, and is enough to make him ſuſpected for a Cheat in his pretended Art, and that is, he ſeems to draw the Woman in by a (51) *Wile* to hear her Fortune, ſaying to her, *v.* 16. *Woman go, call thy Husband*; upon whoſe denying ſhe had any Husband, Jeſus was forward,

(51) Percontando de Viro, Occaſionem cepit occulta revelandi. *Sancti Cyril. Alex. in Loc.*

very

very forward to ſurprize her with his Knowledge of her having had five Huſbands, and living then in Adultery; which raiſing the ſilly Woman's Admiration of his prophetick and ſoothſaying Talent, he cloſes with her Conceptions, and what upon other Occaſions, before wiſer People, he was (52) backward to own, ſays to her, *that he was the Meſſiah;* and ſo he paſs'd for the *Meſſiah* with her and the Men of *Sychar*, who had no more Wit than to receive him for ſuch, upon ſuch Proof, and gave him Entertainment for no leſs than *v.* 40. *two Days.* I am glad we hear of no Money, he ſqueez'd out of them for the Exerciſe of his prophetick Art, which our *Divines* would have made an Argument of their Divine Right to Tythes, Fees, and Stipends for their Divinations.

But no more of this ſilly Story according to the Letter. To point at it is enough to expoſe it to the conſiderate and unprejudiced. I could not help ſaying ſo much as I have; becauſe it is neceſſary to form ſome Invective againſt the Letter, to make way for the Reception of the myſtical and allegorical Interpretation of it, which I am now to ſpeak to.

(52) *John Ch.* x. *v.* 24.

Tho'

Tho' the Fathers, againſt whoſe Authority I dare not write, or I ſhould be tempted to it in this Caſe, acknowledge the Letter of this Story, ſuſpecting only ſome (53) particular Paſſages of it; yet they look upon the whole, for all that, as a (54) typical Narration, and endeavour at the myſtical Conſtruction of all and every part of it. St. *Auguſtin*, as if he was afraid ſome Chriſtians of After-times ſhould eſpouſe, as our Divines do, only the Letter, prefaces his Expoſition of this Story with theſe Words, ſaying, (55) *There are Myſteries in all the Sayings and Actions of our Saviour, particularly in the Story of the Woman of* Samaria, *and whoever careleſſly and imprudently* (meaning literally)

(53) Fortaſſe verum non erat, *Judæos cum Samaritanis Commercium non habere*, —— ac ne illud quidem verum, *neque Hauſtorium habes, & Puteus altus eſt*, —— fortaſſe etiam neque illud, *quod Jacob ex Puteo biberit, & filii ejus, & Pecora ejus. Origen. in Loc.*

(54) Plena Myſteriis & gravida Sacramentis. *Sancti Auguſt. in Johan. Ch.* iv.

(55) Evangelica Sacramenta in Domini noſtri Jeſu Chriſti dictis factiſq; ſignata non omnibus patent, & ea nonnulli minus diligenter, minuſq; ſobrie interpretando, afferunt plerumq; pro ſalute Perniciem, & pro Cognitione Veritatis Errorem, inter quæ illud eſt Sacramentum quod Scriptum eſt de hac Samaritana, *&c. In Quæſt.* 63, *de* Lxxxiii. *Queſt.*

rally) *interprets it, will advance erroneous and pernicious Doctrine*; which, if modern Commentators had any Regard for the Authority of St. *Auguſtin*, is enough to deter them from their literal Expoſitions. The moſt literal Interpreter among the Fathers, whom I know of, is St. *Cyril*, and he ſays (56) there is a Type and Parable in this Story. But to deſcend to Particulars.

By the *Woman of Samaria* is to be underſtood an (57) heretical and adulterous Church, which Jeſus, *being wearied* with her (58) corrupt State, will meet with in *the ſixth Hour*, that is in (59) the *ſixth grand Age* of the World. So, by the By, according to the Fathers, *Jeſus* will come to, and meet with the *Samaritan* Church to her Edification, at the ſame Time that he cures the Church of her *Iſſue of Blood* and *Spirit of Infirmity*.

(56) Ως εν τυπω παλιν ημιν ὁ δι' αινιγματων υποδεικνευς. *In Loc. Johan.*

(57) Illa Mulier Typum gerebat Eccleſiæ, quæ ventura erat ex Gentibus—— Eccleſiæ non juſtificatæ, ſed juſtificandæ. *Sancti Auguſt. in Loc. Johan.*

(58) Tunc fatigatur Chriſtus, quando nullam Virtutem in Populo ſuo recognoſcit. *Sancti Auguſt. in Serm.* xciii. *Appen.*

(59) Hora ſexta id eſt, ſexta Ætate Generis Humani. *Sancti Auguſt. in Quæſt.* 64. lxxxiii. *Quæſt.*

And where did *Jesus* meet with the Woman of *Samaria?* At *Jacob*'s *Well*, where she was for Water to quench Thirst: So at the (60) *Well* of the Holy Scriptures, whose Sense lies deep as in a Well, and flows with Knowledge as with Water, will Christ then find his Church, drawing and drinking of the (61) Waters of the Letter, which could not quench the Thirst of the Soul hitherto: But in the Perfection of Time, signified by the *sixth Hour*, will Christ, according to the Fathers, enable her to draw out of this *Well* of the Profundity of the Scriptures, spiritual Waters of divine Knowledge, which will daily more and more, like the Fountains of the Waters of Life, arise and flow in upon the Soul, and constantly recreate and refresh her with Wisdom, to her Delight and Satisfaction; so as she

(60) Puteus est divina Scriptura, scientia scatens, ut aqua, cujus putei Profunditas sunt plena Mysteriis Symbola. *In Theoph. Ceram Homil.* xxxviii. *de Samaritana.*

(61) Lex secundum Literam est aqua amara. *Hieronym. in Ezekiel. Ch.* xlvii. Qui bibit ex hac aqua sitiet rursus, id est, qui participat profunditatem humanæ sapientiæ, prudentesq; Rationes, receptis Intelligentiis judicio suo inventis, tamen rursus secundo cogitans, denuo dubitabit de his in quibus requieverat. *Origen. in Loc. Johan.*

may

may be ſaid never to thirſt more, after the manner ſhe does now.

And Jeſus *then* told the Woman of *Samaria all that ſhe had done:* So will Chriſt in the *ſixth Hour*, that is, towards the latter End of the *ſixth Age* of the World, give the Woman of the Church to underſtand *all that ſhe has done*, according to the Writings of *Moſes* and the Prophets, who, upon the Teſtimony of the Fathers, have written a prophetical Hiſtory of her, in Types, Symbols and Parables; which Underſtanding of the Things that have been propheſy'd of her, will enable her, of Conſequence, to prove and declare to the World, with Joy and Pleaſure, that *Jeſus* is the true Meſſiah, the Chriſt, and Fulfiller of the Law and the Prophets.

But particularly, as *Jeſus* then told the Woman that *ſhe had had five Huſbands, and was then an Adultereſs* with one who was not her true Husband: So the Church will be made to apprehend, according to (62) *Origen* and (63) St. *Auguſtin*, and others, how ſhe has

 had

(62) *In Locum Johan. Evang.*

(63) Quinque enim Viros habuiſti, & nunc quem habes *non eſt Vir tuus.* Sed non ſunt hæc carnabiter acci-

had five Husbands of the five bodily Senſes, that is, metaphorically ſpeaking, has been *wedded* not only to ſenſual Pleaſures, but to the ſenſible Things of the Letter of the five Books of *Moſes*; and that at preſent, conſequently, ſhe lives in Adultery (64) with Anti-Chriſt, whom the Fathers call the Devil, inſtead of the Spirit of Chriſt, the Spirit of the Law, who ſhould be her true Spouſe, whom ſhe ſhould *call* for, and believe in.

And not only the Woman of *Samaria*, but the Men of the City, *Sychar*, believed *Jeſus* to be the Meſſiah, *v.* 42. upon what he ſaid to themſelves as well as to her: So the Miniſters of the Letter, who are *Sycharites*, according to *Origen* and *Theophanes Cerameus*, will be clearly convinced, and be able to convince others, that *Jeſus is the Chriſt or Meſſiah*, when

accipienda, ne huic ipſi Mulieri Samaritanæ ſimiles videamur—Per quinque Viros, quinque Libros Moſis nonnulli accipiunt — ſed quinque Viri intelliguntur quinque Corporis ſenſus. Et quia naturales ſunt ipſi Senſus, qui ætatem primam regunt, recte dicuntur Mariti. *In Quæſt. 64. de* lxxxiii. *Quæſt.*

(64) *Et nunc quem habes non eſt Vir tuus*; Quia non eſt in te (Eccleſia) Spiritus qui intelligat Deum, cum quo legitimum potes habere Conjugium; ſed Error Diaboli potius dominatur, qui te adulterina Contaminatione corrumpit. *Ven. Bedæ in Locum.*

they

they ſhall hear, learn and apprehend from the Spirit of the Law and the Prophets, that the Church and all ſhe has been doing, was foretold and propheſy'd of.

Laſtly, *Jeſus*'s Diſciples, *v.* 27. are ſaid *to marvel that he talk'd with the Woman.* What in the Name of Wonder, literally, could be the Meaning of this? Did they *marvel* at *Jeſus*'s Condeſcenſion to ſpeak to a Woman, as if the Sex was beneath his Care? Or did they *marvel* that he who was very baſhful, had Courage to ſpeak to one? Or did they *marvel* at his Converſation with a Whore, for Fear of his being tempted by her? Some one or other of theſe muſt be the *marvel* of the Diſciples; but how abſurd and ridiculous they all are, according to the Letter, let a reaſonable Man judge. But myſtically, the true Diſciples of our Lord, who underſtand the Myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, will, when they are apprized of *Jeſus*'s ſpiritual Converſation with his Church, and of all the Things that ſhe has done according to Prophecy, *marvel* with rapturous Aſtoniſhment at the Wiſdom and Power of God in the Accompliſhment of the Scriptures.

After ſuch a myſtical and allegorical Manner, is every minute Circumſtance of this Story of the *Samaritan* Woman to be

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apply'd. St. *Auguſtin* (65) ſays there are ſo many great Myſteries contain'd in it, that they require much Time to go thro' them all. I find it ſo, and that no leſs than a Volume might be written of them, out of the Fathers. But what I have briefly here touch'd on, is enough to convince any one of the Abſurdities of the Letter of this Miracle, which conſiſted in the telling a Woman her Fortune, and ſuch a Fortune, as *Jeſus* by *Craft* might come to the Knowledge of. Therefore, for the Honour of *Jeſus*, let us look upon the whole Story as a typical and parabolical Repreſentation of what would be myſteriouſly and more wonderfully done by him.

And thus I have ſpoken to the three Miracles, propoſed to be treated on in this Diſcourſe. Before I enter upon my third general Head, which is, *to conſider what Jeſus means when he appeals to his Miracles as to a Witneſs of his divine Authority*; I muſt take to Task ſome more of his pretended Miracles, even till I have not left him a good, credible and ſubſtantial Miracle, according to the Letter, to appeal to. The Conſequence of which will be, that his myſterious Operations

(65) Magna quidem acta ſunt Sacramenta, ſed anguſtum Tempus eſt, ut omnia pertractentur. *In Serm.* xci. *Sect.* 2.

are

are to prove his Authority and Meſſiahſhip, or we muſt give up him and his Religion for a Piece of Fraud and Impoſture.

What Miracles will be the Subject of my next Diſcourſe, I can't certainly foretell, but there are many Hiſtorical as well as miraculous Parts of *Jeſus*'s Life, that according to the Letter, are to be call'd into Queſtion; ſuch as

The Hiſtory of his riding on an Aſs to *Jeruſalem*. I have given ſome Offence on this Point already in my *Moderator*, and ought to excuſe or juſtify my ſelf, by calling the Fathers to Account for laughing at the Letter of that Story. It was an untoward Saying of St. *Jerome*, that I there cited, and ſuffered a Proſecution for: But it is a worſe Intimation of St. *John* of *Jeruſalem*, who, if there was any literal Truth in the Peoples pulling off their Garments and Branches of Trees, and ſtrewing them in the Way of *Jeſus*, will needs have it not reſpectfully, but miſchievouſly done, to make the Colt ſtumble, and ſo diſmount his Rider. And according to him it may be queſtioned, whether the *Hoſannahs* of the People were of any more Reſpect to *Jeſus*, than the *Huzzahs* of a *Mob* would be to the Biſhop of *L———n*, if to ſhew his Meekneſs and Lowlineſs, he ſhould ride upon an Aſs, in his *Pontificalibus* through this

this City. But I have here a momentous Controverſy to decide about the Beaſt *Jeſus* rode on. St. *Matthew* ſeems to ſay, he rode upon both *Aſs* and *Colt* together. St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* ſay, he rode upon the *Colt*, *on which Man never before ſat*. The Biſhop of *Lichfield* ſays, he rode upon the *Aſs* (on which Man had before ſat) and the *Colt* ambled after. St. *Cyril* and St. *Chryſoſtom* ſay, he rode upon the *Colt*, and the *She-Aſs* trotted after. St. *John* the *Evangeliſt* ſays, he rode upon a *Mule*, or an οναριον Aſs-like Creature of the neuter Gender. The *Jewiſh Cabaliſts* ſay, their *Meſſiah* was to ride on a great huge *Aſs*, big enough to carry him and all true *Iſraelites*, and that the Miniſters of *Antichriſt* would then hang an *A--ſs*. So do the great Doctors of the World differ! To whom I ſhall decree the Prize of Orthodoxy, I ſhan't foretel; but am inclined to famour the Opinion of the *Cabaliſts*. However, I ſhall be very grave as well as learned on this Head: And if I can, I will, to oblige Dr. *Sherlock*, hook in a Digreſſion about *Shilo*'s *binding his Fole to the Vine, and his Aſſes Colt to the choice Vine*. The Accompliſhment of which *literal* Prophecy ſeems to have been drop'd in the Providence of God, or

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the *Dean* of *Chicheſter* (67) had never ſtopt at it. I will endeavour to look it up, in ſome Corner of Hiſtory, if it be but to merit the Praiſes of the *Maſter* of the *Temple*.

I muſt alſo ſometime take into Conſideration the Story of *Jeſus*'s Abode in the Wilderneſs, forty Days, in Company of the *Devil*, who tempted him. This literally, as our *Divines* underſtand it, is a ſcandalous Story. The *Jews*, in our Saviour's Time, ſaid, that thro' *Belzebub*, he caſt out *Devils*; and their Poſterity have aſſerted, that he learned the magick Art of a *Dæmon*. This Story gives too much Grounds for ſuch a Suſpicion. Our *Divines*, who ſhould know beſt, talk of abundance of Miſchief, the *Devil* has been permitted to do in the World ever ſince; I hope it was not by Compact and Agreement between them; but it would have been of ſome Satisfaction to the contrary, if the *Evangeliſt* had told us expreſly upon what Terms they met and parted. As Fables go, it is ſaid to the Honour of St. *Dunſtan*, that he took the *Devil* by the Noſe, when he tempted him; and if *Jeſus* had taken him by the *Collar*, and thruſt him into his

(67) *In his Diſſertation on the Bleſſing of* Judah.

Dungeon, and there chain'd him, and ſhut *Hell Gates* upon him; I appeal to honeſt plain Chriſtians, whether ſuch an *Herculean* Labour would not have pleaſed them well. Ever ſince I read of *Martin Luther*'s Converſation with the *Devil*, I have had but indifferent Thoughts of his *Proteſtantiſm*; and unleſs the Fathers turn this Story before us into Myſtery, Allegory and Cabaliſm, I ſhall think ill of Chriſtianity.

I ſhould alſo take into Examination the Story of an Angel's appearing to the Shepherds, and ſaying to them; *Behold I bring you Tidings of great Joy*, &c. If there was any Truth literally in *this* Story, and in *that* of a Star's appearing to the wiſe Men, there muſt be a great Miſtake in the Report of both of them. St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke* have both blunder'd. It was the Star that appear'd to the Shepherds by Night; and the Angel (I ſpeak upon Reaſon and Authority) that was ſent to the wiſe Men. What then to do with theſe two Stories, and to ſalve the Credit of the *Evangeliſts*, I knew not, till the Fathers directed me to the Uſe of a mythological *Metamorphoſis*: And then I preſently learn'd the Trick on't, to transform Stars into Angels, and Shepherds too, or Paſtors of Chriſt's Flock (which

(which was the Difficulty) into wiſe Men; and ſo I made one Moral or Myſtery of the two Fables.

I muſt alſo ſometime take to Task the Story of the *many dead Bodies of the Saints, that upon Chriſt's Reſurrection, came out of their Graves, and appeared unto many*; which is too imperfectly related to merit Credit. The *Evangeliſt*, if he would have a reaſonable Man believe his Story, ſhould have told us, who thoſe Saints were, and what Numbers of them; and whether they appear'd to the converted or unconverted *Jews*; whether they were ſome of the Patriarchs and Prophets of old; or ſome lately departed Diſciples, who, for all *Jeſus*'s healing Power, died in the Time of his Miniſtry; and whether there were any Women among thoſe Saints; and whether they appeared naked (as *Jeſus* modeſtly did to *Mary Magdalen*, unleſs he ſlip'd himſelf by *Stealth* into the Clothes of the Gardener, which might be the Reaſon of her Miſtake, for ſhe ſuppoſed ſhe ſaw the Gardener) and whether they return'd again to Corruption, or aſcended into Heaven. For want of theſe ſpecifical Circumſtances, the *Evangeliſt* has told us a Tale, that has neither Head nor Foot to it: and unleſs the Fathers myſtically anſwer, to Satisfaction, every one of the aforeſaid

Queries, I'll reject this Story for mere Romance and Impoſture.

Theſe and many other hiſtorical and ſeemingly miraculous Stories of the Goſpel, are ſometime to be taken into Conſideration; for I will not give this Work over, till I have demonſtrated beyond all Contradiction, that the evangelical Writings are but the Shadow of divine Myſteries; and that literal Interpreters, whom (68) *Origen* calls *vulgar Capacities*, are under a Miſtake, if they think they underſtand any Thing, as they ought, of the four Goſpels.

I ſhould conclude now, as it becomes a *Moderator*, with an Addreſs to *Infidels* and *Apoſtates*, the great Combatants in this Controverſy. But I have not Room to be as large, as I would, in my Exhortations to them diſtinctly, ſo I can only deſire them to continue the Controverſy with Zeal and Vigour, not doubting but it will end to the Honour of Jeſus, the Good of his Church, and the Happineſs of Mankind. The bleſſed Fruits of this Controverſy are already ſeen and felt in

(68) Ut Lex Umbram continet futurorum bonorum, quæ declarantur ab ea Lege; ſic etiam Evangelium, quod vel a quibuſq; vulgaribus intelligi exiſtimatur, Umbram docet Myſteriorum Chriſti. *In Præfat. ad Johan. Evang.*

the

the almoſt Cure of a moſt malignant Diſtemper, called *Bigottry*, which has been the Bane of human Society, and in Times paſt more deſtructive of the World than either War or Peſtilence. Go on then, *great* and *good Sirs*, till the Cure is perfected. And as you merit Praiſes and Rewards for your ſeveral Labours; ſo I hope you'll meet with them. The *Nobility* and *Gentry* of the Kingdom, as I learn, are ſenſibly touch'd with the Uſefulneſs of this Controverſy; whereupon it is to be hoped the *Legiſlative Authority* will ſoon give Thanks to the great Mr. *Grounds* and Mr. *Scheme* for their Pains in it; and not forget to do Juſtice to the *Biſhops* and *Clergy* according to their Merits. But I can't ſtay here to talk more on this Head, being obliged to make an Epiſtolary

P. S. To Mr. *T. Ray*, the Author of a *Diſcourſe*, call'd *Our Saviour's Miracles vindicated*, &c. As I, *Sir*, enter'd the *Preſs*, you came forth, or I might poſſibly have paid more of my Reſpects to you another Way. But upon mature Conſideration, I found a properer Reply could not be made to you, than is the foregoing Diſcourſe; which, if you are not ſick of your former Performance, will find you ſome more Work. And that you may

write

write more pertinently againſt this Diſcourſe, than you did againſt my other, I'll give you ſome Inſtructions, *viz.* if you think of writing to the Purpoſe, you muſt prove theſe two Things; *Firſt*, that the Fathers did not hold the Stories of *Jeſus*'s Miracles to be typical and figurative; and *Secondly*, that *Jeſus*'s Miracles neither will nor can receive a myſterious and more wonderful Accompliſhment. But you have not ſaid one Syllable to eirher of theſe Points; conſequently have written nothing to the Purpoſe againſt me. As for Inſtance; in the Miracle of *Jeſus*'s *driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple*: You ſhould prove, *Firſt*, that the Fathers don't hold that Miracle to be typical of the future Ejection of *Biſhops*, *Prieſts*, and *Deacons* out of the Church, that make Merchandize of the Goſpel: And *Secondly*, that it was impoſſible that the Miracle ſhould receive ſuch an Accompliſhment. But you have done nothing of this. So, if you ſhould attempt again to write againſt this Diſcourſe, as for Inſtance, againſt my Explication of the Miracle of *Jeſus*'s healing the Woman, that *had an Iſſue of Blood*; you muſt prove that *that* Story neither was, in the Opinion of the Fathers, typical, nor could receive a myſtical Accompliſhment; or you may as well

well hold your Peace. And after all, whether your Reaſonings for the Letter of Chriſt's Miracles, are equal to mine againſt it, let our Readers judge, who will eaſily diſcern, that you jump over my choiceſt Invectives againſt the Letter, as if you was afraid of being touch'd by them.

As to your charging me falſly in one or two Places, with Miſrepreſentations of the Fathers, I'll expoſtulate that Matter with you, when I hear that the *Biſhop* of *London* gives your Performance, the Reputation of a ſolid, and ſubſtantial one, by a Change of your *Cloak* into a *Gown*, which you ſeem to aim at; or you had never ſo beſmear'd the *Biſhop* with your Compliments, nor had been ſo mealy-mouth'd as to the Point of Liberty.

But what need you, *Sir*, have told the World, that you take me for an *Unbeliever of the Scriptures*. If the *Biſhop*'s wiſe Proſecution of me for an *Infidel* had not given you the Hint, you could never of yourſelf have made that Diſcovery. And why did you not join the Fathers with me in Unbelief? I thought I had been of the ſame Faith with them. A Man of your Penetration into another's Principles, will, I ſuppoſe, from this preſent Diſcourſe, conclude me to be a down-

downright *Atheiſt.* And what muſt I do then to clear myſelf!

If you write any more, *Sir*, I deſire you, without making more Haſte than good Speed, to be as expeditious as you can; or you will not prevent my Publication of another Diſcourſe, like theſe two, to the Honour of *Jeſus*, to whom be Glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

A THIRD

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR,

In VIEW of the Present Controversy between INFIDELS and APOSTATES.

Litteratos gravissimo Somno stertere convincam. HIERON.

By THOMAS WOOLSTON, sometime Fellow of *Sidney-College* in *Cambridge.*

LONDON:

Printed for the Author, and Sold by him next Door below the *Star* in *Aldermanbury*, and by the Booksellers of *London* and *Westminster.* 1728.

[Price One Shiling]

TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God

RICHARD,

Lord Biſhop of St. DAVID'S.

MY LORD,

IN your *Sermon* before the *Society* for Reformation of Manners, you are pleaſed to give a Character of my former *Diſcourſes on Chriſt's Miracles*; which, tho' I don't at all like, yet I thank you for the Favour of taking Notice of them; a *Favour* that I have long'd for from a conſiderable *Clergyman*; but could not flat-

ter myſelf with the Hopes of receiving it from ſo great a *Prelate*.

Some of the inferior *Clergy*, whom I deſpiſe for their Ignorance and Malice, have before in their Converſation repreſented me as an *impious* and *blaſphemous Infidel*; and I have met with Affronts for it: But I never imagin'd that any, much leſs your *Lordſhip*, would have ventur'd ſuch a Character of me from the *Preſs*, for fear of a Reſentment, which would not be agreeable. Surely your *Lordſhip* has not read my *Diſcourſes*, but has taken a Report of them upon Truſt, from ſome Eccleſiaſtical *Noodle*; or you could never have been ſo much miſtaken about my Deſign in them.

I took myſelf to be a Chriſtian of the ſame Faith with the Fathers of the Church; and, without Vanity, think, I have publiſh'd ſome Tracts, in Defence of Chriſtianity, equal

equal, if not ſuperior to any Thing this Age has produced. I repeatedly alſo in my *Diſcourſes on Miracles*, to obviate the Prejudices of an ignorant *Clergy*, made ſolemn Proteſtations of the Sincerity of my Deſign, not to do Service to Infidelity, but to make Way for the Demonſtration of *Jeſus*'s Meſſiahſhip from Prophecy: But all theſe Aſſeverations of the Integrity of my Heart, it ſeems, ſtand for nothing (and I don't wonder at it) with the *Clergy*, who in their Principles, their Oaths, and Subſcriptions are ſo accuſtom'd to prevaricate with God and Man. I ſhall make no more ſerious Proteſtations, of my Faith, but expect your *Lordſhip* ſhould ſoon publiſh a Defence of your foul Charge againſt me, that I may ſee what Skill you have in the impious and blaſphemous Writings of an Infidel.

And if your *railing Accuſation* be not ſoon followed with a Diſſertation

tation of more Reaſon, I ſhall inſiſt on a publick Reparation of the Injury done to my Reputation by your *vile* and *ſlanderous* Sermon; and appeal to the worſhipful *Societies* for Reformation of Manners, whether it be not juſt and reaſonable, you ſhould do one or the other.

Now I have laid hold of your *Lordſhip*, than whom I could not have wiſh'd for an *Adverſary*, that will do me more Honour to overcome, I will hold you faſt; and you muſt expect to be teaz'd and inſulted from the *Preſs*, if you enter not the Liſts againſt me.

A clear Stage, *my Lord*, and no Favour. If you have the Sword of the Spirit in your Hand, cut as ſharply as you can with it. I had conceiv'd a great Opinion of your Learning, and ſhould have been a little apprehenſive of the Power of it; if you had not in your Sermon betray'd

tray'd as great Weakneſs and Ignorance, as could be in a poor *Curat*; or you had never aſſerted that the *Greek* Commentators adher'd more ſtrictly to the litteral Senſe of the Holy Scriptures, as if you knew not, that St. *Theophilus* of *Antioch*, and even *Origen* himſelf and others, the greateſt *Allegoriſts*, if a Compariſon may be made, were *Commentators* of the *Greek* Church.

The ſooner your Lordſhip appears from the *Preſs*, the better, in as much as you may poſſibly prevent my Publication of more *Diſcourſes* of this Kind. And that it may not be long firſt, I will accept of a Diſſertation from you, on any two or three of the Miracles, I have handled, as ſufficient for all. Take your Choice of them: but don't I beſeech you, touch the Miracle of *Jeſus*'s driving the *Buyers* and *Sellers* out of the Temple, becauſe it is a *hot* one, and may poſſibly burn

your

your Fingers. The Miracles, that I have moſt ludicrouſly and of conſequence moſt offenſively handled, are the two of this preſent Diſcourſe. If you pleaſe, *my Lord*, let them be the eaſy and ſhort Task impoſed on you. If you can defend the Letter of the Stories of theſe two Miracles, I'll quietly give up the Reſt to you.

So heartily thanking your Lordſhip for the Favour done me, in taking Notice of my *Diſcourſes on Miracles*, which ſhall be turn'd to good Uſe and Advantage, I ſubſcribe myſelf,

My LORD,

Your moſt obliged

Humble Servant,

Feb. 26. 1728.

Tho. Woolſton.

A THIRD

DISCOURSE

On The

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR, &c.

MY two former Diſcourſes having met with a favourable Reception, I am encouraged to go on and publiſh another; which, without any more Preface, I enter upon, by a Repetition of the three general Heads, at firſt propoſed to be ſpoken to, and they were,

I. To ſhow that the Miracles of healing all Manner of bodily Diſeaſes, which *Jeſus* was juſtly famed for, are none of the proper Miracles of the *Meſſiah*, neither are they ſo much as a good Proof of his divine Authority to found a Religion.

II. To prove, that the literal Hiſtory of many of the Miracles of *Jeſus*, as recorded by the *Evangeliſts*, does imply Abſurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities; conſequently they, either in whole or in part, were never wrought, as they are commonly believed now-a-days, but are only related as prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what would be myſteriouſly and more wonderfully done by him.

III. To conſider, what *Jeſus* means, when he appeals to his Miracles, as to a Teſtimony and a Witneſs of his divine Authority; and to ſhow that he could not properly and ultimately refer to thoſe he then wrought in the *Fleſh*, but to thoſe Myſtical ones, that he would do in the *Spirit*, of which thoſe wrought in the Fleſh are but meer Types and Shadows.

Tho' I have already ſpoken, what may be thought ſufficient, to the firſt of theſe Heads; yet I have ſeveral Things ſtill, both from

from Reaſon and Authority, to add to it; but having not here a convenient Place for that Purpoſe, I defer it to a better Opportunity; and ſo paſs immediately to the Reſumption of my

II. Second general Head, and that is, to prove, that the literal Hiſtory of many of the Miracles of *Jeſus*, as recorded by the *Evangeliſts*, does imply Abſurdities, Improbabilities and Incredibilities; conſequently they, either in whole or in part were never wrought, as it is commonly believed now-a days, but are only related, as prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what would be myſteriouſly and more wonderfully done by him.

To this Purpoſe I have taken into Examination ſix of the Miracles of *Jeſus*, *viz.* thoſe,

1. Of his driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple.

2. Of his exorciſing the *Devils* out of the Mad-men, and ſending them into the Herd of Swine.

3. Of his Transfiguration on the Mount.

4. Of his healing a Woman, that had an Iſſue of Blood, twelve Years.

5. Of his curing a Woman, that had a Spirit of Infirmity, eighteen Years, and

6. Of his telling the *Samaritan* Woman her Fortune of having had five Husbands, and being then an Adultereſs with another Man.

Whether I have not prov'd the Storys of theſe Miracles, either in whole or in part, to conſiſt of Abſurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities, according to the Propoſition before us, I leave my *Readers* to judge; and now will take in Hand

7. A Seventh Miracle of *Jeſus*; *viz.* that (1) *of his curſing the Figtree, for not bearing Fruit out of Seaſon*; which Miracle, upon the bare mention of it, appears to be ſuch an abſurd, fooliſh, and ridiculous, if not malicious and ill-natured Act in *Jeſus*, that I queſtion, whether, for Folly and Abſurdity, it can be equalled in any Inſtance of the Life of a reputed wiſe Man. The Fathers, ſuch as *Origen*, St. *Auguſtin*, St. *John of Jeruſalem*, and others, have all ſaid as ſmart Things, as the wittyeſt Infidels can, againſt the Letter of this Story. St. *Auguſtin* (2) very plainly ſays, that *this Fact in Jeſus*, upon Suppoſition that it was done, was *a fooliſh one*. If therefore I treat

(1) *Matt.* Chap. xxi. *Mark*, Chap. xi. (2) Hoc factum, niſi figuratum, ſtultum invenitur. *In Serm.* lxxvii.

this

this Story a little more ludicrously than ordinary, and expose the Folly of the Fact as well as of the modern Belief of it, I hope their Authority and Example will plead my Excuse for it.

Jesus was hungary, it seems, and being disappointed of Figs, to the Satisfaction of his Appetite, cursed the Figtree. Why so peevish and impatient? Our *Divines*, when they please, make *Jesus* the most patient, resign'd and easy under Sufferings, Troubles and Disappointments, of any Man. If he really was so, he could hardly have been so much out of Humour, for want of a few Figs, to the Allay of his Hunger. But to curse the Figtree upon it, was as foolishly and passionately done, as for another Man to throw the Chairs and Stools about the House; because his Dinner is not ready at a critical Time, or before it could be got ready for him.

But *Jesus* was hungry, some will say, and the Disappointment provoked him. What if he was hungry? He should, as he knew the Return of his Appetite, have made a better and more certain Provision for it. Where was *Judas* his Steward and Caterer with his Bag of Victuals as well as Money? Poor Fore-

cast

caſt, and Management amongſt them, or *Jeſus* had nevet truſted to the uncertain Fruits of a Figtree, which he eſpy'd at a Diſtance, for his Breakfaſt.

And if *Jeſus* was fruſtrated of a long'd-for Meal of Figs, what need he have ſo reveng'd the Diſappointment on the (3) ſenſleſs and faultleſs Tree? Was it, becauſe he was forc'd to faſt longer than uſual and expedient? not ſo, I hope neither: Could not Angels, if he was in a deſert Place, have adminiſtred unto him? Or could not he miraculouſly have created Bread for himſelf and his Company, as he multiplied or increaſed the Loaves for his Thouſands in the Wilderneſs? What Occaſion then for his being out of Humour for want of Food? If he was of Power to provide Bread for others on a ſudden, he might ſure have ſupply'd his own Neceſſities, and ſo have kept his Temper, without breaking into a violent Fit of Paſſion, upon preſent Want and Diſappointment.

But what is yet worſe, *the Time of Figs was not yet*, when Jeſus look'd and long'd for them. Did ever any one here

(3) Nulla eſſet Ligni Culpa, quia Lignum ſine ſenſu non habebat Culpam. Auguſtin *in Serm.* lxxxix.

or

or read of any Thing more (4) unreaſonable than for a Man to expect Fruit out of Seaſon? *Jeſus* could not but know this before he came to the Tree, and if he had had any Conſideration, he would not have expected Figs on it, much leſs, if he had regarded his own Reputation, as a wiſe Man, would he have ſo reſented the Want of them. What, if a *Yeoman* of *Kent* ſhould go to look for *Pipins* in his Orchard at *Eaſter*, (the ſuppoſed Time (5) that *Jeſus* ſought for theſe Figs) and, becauſe of a Diſappointment, cut down all his Trees? What then would his Neighbours make of him? Nothing leſs, than a *Laughing-Stock*; and if the Story got into our publick News, he would be the Jeſt and Ridicule of Mankind. How *Jeſus* ſalv'd his Credit upon this his wild Prank; and prevented the Laughter of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* upon it, I know not; but I cannot think of this Part of the Letter of this Story, without ſmiling at it at this Day; and wonder our *Divines* are not laugh'd

(4) Quærit poma; neceſciebat tempus nondum eſſe? quod Cultor Arboris ſciebat, Creator Arboris neſciebat? *Auguſtini in Serm.* lxxxix.

(5) Hoc ideo probamus, quia Paſſionis Domini Dies propinquabat, et ſcimus quo tempore paſſus ſit. *Ibid.*

out

out of Countenance for reading it gravely, and having *Jesus* in Admiration for it.

Again, I would gladly know, whose Figtree this was, and whether *Jesus* had any legal Right to the Fruit, if haply he had found any on it, or any Leave or Authority to smite it with a Curse for its Unfruitfulness? As to the Tree's being *Jesus*'s Property, that could not be. For he was so far from being either Landlord or Tenant, that it's said he had not where to lay his Head. During the Time of his Ministry, he was but a Wanderer, like a Mendicant Fryar, or an itenerant Preacher, and before that Time was no better than a Journeyman Carpenter (of whose Workmanship, I wonder, the Church of *Rome* has no holy Relicks, not so much as a Three-footed-stool, or a Pair of Nutcrackers;) consequently he had no House nor Land of his own by Law, much less any Figtree, and least of all *this* which he espy'd at a distance in his Travels. How then had he any Right to the Figs, if he had met with any? I hope he ask'd Leave beforehand of the Proprietor, or *Infidels* will say of him, that if he had had an Opportunity he would have been a *Rob-Orchard*. And if he had no Right to the Fruit, much less to smite the Tree with a Curse; where was

his

his Honour, (6) his Juſtice, his Goodneſs, and his Honeſty in this Act? The *Evangeliſts*, if they would have us to think, *Jeſus* did no wrong to any Man, ſhould have left us ſomewhat upon Record, to Satisfaction, in this Caſe; or *Infidels*, who have here Scope for it, will think worſe of *Jeſus*, than poſſibly he may deſerve. Whether *Jeſus*, modeſtly ſpeaking, met with any Blame or Reprimand from the Proprietor, for his Act of Execration, none can affirm or deny. But if any one ſo ſpitefully and maliciouſly ſhould deſtroy almoſt any other Tree, whether fruitful or not, of another Man's, in this Country, he would have good Luck, if he eſcaped the Houſe of Correction for it.

And what now have our *Divines* to ſay, to all this Reaſoning againſt the Letter of this Story? Nothing more than "That "the Act of curſing the Figtree, whe-"ther it be at this Diſtance of Time re-"conceileable to Reaſon, Juſtice and Pru-"dence or not, was a ſupernatural Work, "above the Power of Nature or Art to "imitate, conſequently it was a Miracle, "and they will admire and adore *Jeſus*

(6) Arbor non eſt juſtè ſiccata *Johan Hieroſol. in Loc. Marci.*

" for it." And to agree with them at preſent, that it was a real Miracle, and a ſupernatural Event, yet I hope, they'll acknowledge, that if *Jeſus*, as St. *Auguſtin* (7) ſays, had, inſtead of curſing the Figtree, made a dry, dead and withered one, immediately to bud, flouriſh and revive, and in an Inſtant to bring forth ripe Fruits, out of Seaſon, it would have pleaſed them much better. Such an Inſtance of his Power had been an indiſputable Miracle: Such an Inſtance of his divine Power had carry'd Goodneſs along with it, and none of the foreſaid Exceptions could have been made to it: Such an Inſtance of his Almighty Power, had been a Demonſtration of his being Lord of the Creation, and Author of the Fruits of the Earth for the Uſe of Man, in their Seaſon, or he could not have produced them out of Seaſon. In ſuch

(7) Si miraculum fuerat tantummodo commendandum, et non alquid prophetice figurandum, multo clementiùs dominus et ſua miſericordia digniùs fecerat, Si quam aridam invenerit, viridem redderet, ſicut languentes ſanavit. Tunc vero e contrario, quaſi adverſus Regulam Clementiæ ſuæ invenit Arborem virentem, præter tempus fructus nondum habentem, non tamen fructum agricolæ negantem, et aridam fecit. *In Serm.* lxxxix *Sect.* 3.

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an Inſtance of Power, his divine Care and Providence againſt Hunger and Want would have been viſible; and it would have been an Admonition to us, to depend daily upon him for the Comforts and Neceſſaries of Life: Such an Inſtance of his Power would have been, as St. *Auguſtin* ſays above, like his Miracles of healing Diſeaſes, of making the Languid, *Sound*; and the Feeble, *Strong*; and we might more certainly have infer'd from one with the other, that both were the Operations of a good God. But this Inſtance of his curſing the Figtree in this Faſhion ſpoils the Credit, and ſullies the Glory of his other Miracles. It is in its own Nature of ſuch a malevolent Aſpect, that its enough to make us ſuſpect the Beneficence of *Chriſt* in his other Works, and to queſtion whether there might not be ſome latent Poyſon and diabolical Deſign under the Colour of his fairer Pretences to Almighty Power. It is ſo like the malignant Practices of *Witches*, who, as Stories go, upon Envy, Grudge, or Diſtaſte, ſmite their Neighbours Cattle with languiſhing Diſtempers, till they die, that it's hard, if not impoſſible, to diſtinguiſh one from the other in Spite and Malice. If *Mahomet*, and not *Jeſus*, had been the Author

of this Miracle, our *Divines* would presently have discover'd the *Devil*'s Foot in it, and have said that *Satan* drew him into a Scrape, in the Execution of this mad and foolish Frolick, on purpose to expose *him* for a *Wizard* and *his* Musselmen of all Ages since for Fools in believing on him. The Spirit of *Christ*, who is all Love and Mercy, should, one would think, breath forth nothing but Goodness and Kindness to Mankind; but that such a pestilential Blast, like a mortiferous North-East Wind in some Seasons, should proceed from his Mouth, to the Destruction of another Man's harmless and inoffensive Tree, is what none upon Earth can account for.

Our *Divines*, one or other of them, have publish'd several notable Notions about Miracles, and have laid down good Rules to distinguish *true* from *false* ones; but none of them, as far as I perceive, have taken any Pains to shew the Consistence of *Jesus*'s Miracles to their own Rules and Notions. Mr. *Chandler*, (who as the *Archbishop* (8) says, has rightly stated the Notion of a Miracle) among

(8) See Arch-bishop *Wake*'s Letter to Mr. *Chandler*, which is handed about Town and Country.

his

his Rules of judging by whom Miracles are perform'd, ſays, (9) *That the Things pretended to be done, are to be ſuch, as that it is conſiſtent with the Perfections of God to intereſt himſelf in*; and again, *they muſt be ſuch as anſwer to the Character of God as a good and gracious Being*; and again, *It ſeems reaſonable to believe, that whenever the firſt and beſt of Beings is pleaſed to ſend an extraordinary Meſſenger with a Revelation of his Will, he will furniſh him with ſuch Proofs of his Miſſion, as may argue not only the Power of him in whoſe Name he comes, but his Love to Mankind, and his Inclination to do them good.* I have no Diſlike to theſe Notions of Mr. *Chandler*; but as it is not to be queſtioned, that he (and the *Archbiſhop* too) had this Miracle of *Jeſus*'s curſing the Figtree, and ſome others, as of *his boiſterous driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple*; of *his ſending the Devils into the Herd of Swine*; of *his turning Water into Wine for the Uſe of Men, who had before well drank*, &c. in his View, when he gave forth the foreſaid Rules; for acute and learned Writers in Theology are ſuppoſed to have their Wits about them; ſo it is

(9) Vindication of the Chriſtian Religion. p. 82.

to

to be hop'd that he or the *Archbiſhop* will ſoon publiſh ſomewhat to reconcile theſe Miracles of *Jeſus* to their own Notions; tho' I don't expect it before *latter Lammas*.

But after all, it may be queſtioned, if Infidels ſhould go about it, whether this Work of *Jeſus* was miraculous; and whether there was not more of the Craft of Man, than of the Power of God in it; or to uſe Mr. *Chandler*'s (10) Words, whether it don't *look like the little Tricks and cunning Deceits of Impoſtors*. St. *Matthew* ſays, *preſently the Figtree withered away*; but this *preſently* is an indeterminate Time, and may be underſtood of a Day, or a Week or two, as well as of the Moment in which the Words were ſpoken; *Let no Fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever*. St. *Mark* ſays, *that in the Morning as the Diſciples paſſed by, they ſaw the Figtree dry'd up from the Roots*, which was at leaſt the Day (11) after the Curſe was utter'd, ſo that there was certainly four and twenty Hours for its withering; and if it is ſaid that the *Tree dry'd up from the Roots*, it does not imply that the Trunk of it periſh'd, or was reduc'd to

(10) *Ibid.* (11) Quod ſequenti die viderint exaruiſſe ficum. *Theophylact. in Locum Marci.*

nothing

nothing; but only that the green Leaves of the Whole, and of every Part of it, were in a withering Condition: And might not all this be done without a Miracle? What if *Jews* and *Infidels* ſhould ſay, that *Jeſus*, being minded to impoſe on his Diſciples and Followers, took a ſecret Opportunity beforehand to lay his Carpenter's Ax to the Root of this Tree, and ſo imperceptibly circumciſed it, as that the Leaves did, what they will do, wither in a Night and a Day's Time. God forbid, that I ſhould think, *Jeſus* did ſo; but as to the Poſſibility of ſuch a Fraud in an Impoſtor, none can doubt of it.

I am ſo far from thinking there was any ſuch Fraud in this ſuppoſed Miracle of *Jeſus*, that I don't believe it was at all done by him according to the Letter: And for this I have not only a clear and intrinſick Proof from the Story itſelf; but the Authority of the Fathers. St. *Ambroſe*, treating on the Parable of the Figtree in (12) St. *Luke*, intimates, that what St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* write of *Jeſus*'s curſing the Figtree, is but (13) Part of the ſame Pa-

(12) Chap. xiii. (13) Quid ſibi vult, quod in Evangelio ſuo Dominus Fici Parabolam *frequenter* inducit: Habes enim alibi, quod juſſu Domini Viriditas omnis hujus Ligni frondentis aurerit. *In Loc. Luce.*

rable.

rable. And St. *John* of *Jeruſalem* (14) ſays expreſsly enough, that the three *Evangeliſts* write of one and the ſame Fig-tree, conſequently parabolically, and that, what St *Matthew* and St. *Mark* write of it, was no more a literal Tranſaction, than the Parable in St. *Luke*. Thanks to theſe holy Fathers for their ridding us of the Belief of the Letter of this Story, which otherwiſe might have perplex'd us with its Abſurdities before urg'd. And to their Opinion I deſire it may be added and conſidered, whether it be not as reaſonable in itſelf to take what the three *Evangeliſts* write of this Figtree, as Part of one Story, as well as, what they write of the *Woman with her Iſſue of Blood*, and of *Jeſus's caſting the Devils out of the Madmen*, and of other Miracles which are but ſeveral Relations of the ſame Story, Parable or Miracle. Neither is it any Argument for a literal Tranſaction of this Miracle, that the *Evangeliſts* ſpeak of it, as a Thing done: For as *Origen* ſays, there are ſome Things ſpoken of in the *Evangeliſts*, as Facts, which were never tranſacted; ſo it is of the Nature of Prophecy (and our

(14) Vidiamus, ubi alibi ſcriptum de iſta ficu; in Evangelio ſecundum Lucam legimus, &c. *In Loc. Marci. Hom.* xii.

Saviour

Saviour in his whole Life propheſied) to ſpeak of Things to come, as if they were already paſt; becauſe ſuch Prophecies are not to be underſtood till after their Accompliſhment, and then the Reaſon of the Uſe of the *præter*, inſtead of the *future* Tenſe, in Prophecy, will be viſible. But what, in my Opinion, is an abſolute Demonſtration, that there's no Truth in the Letter of this Story, is, what our Saviour adds, upon the Diſciples wondering at the ſudden withering of the Figtree, ſaying, (15) *that if they had Faith, they ſhould not only do what was done to the Figtree; but ſhould ſay to this Mountain,* (that was near him, I ſuppoſe) *be thou removed and caſt into the Sea, and it ſhall be done.* But theſe Things were never litterally done by them, conſequently *Jeſus* himſelf did not litterally curſe the Figtree; or the Diſciples wanted Faith for the doing the ſaid Miracles, which is an Abſurdity to ſuppoſe; or *Jeſus* talked idly of a Promiſe to inveſt them with a Power, they were never to be poſſeſs'd of. But of what ill Conſequence to Religion, either of theſe Suppoſitions is, let the old Ob-

(15) *Matth.* Chap. xxi. 21.

jection in *Paſchaſius Ratbertus* (16) ſpeak; which I ſhall not ſtay here to urge and revive; but only ſay at preſent, that if *Jeſus* actually curſed a Figtree, his Diſciples ought to have done ſo too, and to remove Mountains. If we adhere to the Letter in one Caſe, we muſt in the other alſo; but we are only to look to the Myſtery in both, or St. *Auguſtin* (17) will tell us, that *Jeſus* utter'd vain, empty and inſignificant Words and Promiſes.

St. *Auguſtin*, who believes no more of the Letter of this Story, than I do, ſays, that the Works of *Jeſus* are all figurative and of a ſpiritual Signification, which is ſo manifeſt from his Act of curſing the Figtree, as Men muſt, (18) *whether they will or not* acknowledge it. But he is miſtaken: Tho' there might be none in his Time

(16) Quanquam igitur juxta Literam hæc facta non legantur ab Apoſtolis, ſicut quidam Paganorum calumniati ſunt, et garriunt contra nos, etiam in ſuis ſcriptis afferentes Apoſtolos non habuiſſe fidem, quia montes non tranſtulerunt neque Ficulneas verbo exſiccarunt. *In Loc. Matth.* (17) Legimus Apoſtolorum miracula, nuſquam autem legimus arborem ab his arefactam, aut montem in mare tranſlatum; quæramus ergo in myſterio ubi factum ſit, non enim Verba Domini vacare potuerant. *In Serm.* lxxxix.

(18. Sed futurum aliquid Miraculo commendaſſe, multa ſunt quæ nos admoneant, nobiſq; perſuadeant, imo ab *invitis* exterqueant. *Ibid.*

who

who would queſtion, that this ſuppoſed Fact of *Jeſus* had a myſtical Signification; yet if he had liv'd in our Days, he would have met with *Divines*, who, for all the foreſaid Abſurdities and their Cogency to drive us to Allegory, do adhere to the Letter only, whether the Truth, Credibility and Reaſonableneſs of it be defenſible or not. But then to do Juſtice to St. *Auguſtin*'s Aſſertion, he would have met with others, who *againſt their Wills*, interpret this Miracle figuratively, ſuch as Dr. *Hammond* and Dr. *Whitby*, who ſay, *Jeſus* curſed the Figtree by way of Type of the Deſtruction of the *Jewiſh* State, which declined and waſted away after the Similitude of this withering Tree. But why then don't theſe *Commentators* allegorically interpret and apply other Miracles of our Saviour? Becauſe they think the Letter will ſtand good and abide the Teſt without an Allegory. And why do they allegoriſe this Miracle only? Becauſe of the Dificulties and Abſurdities of the Letter, which they can't account for. And are theſe Reaſons good? No, certainly: The *Evangeliſts* ſhould have made the Diſtinction for them. They ſhould have told us, which Miracles are to be allegoris'd and myſtically applied, and which are not; or we are to allegoriſe all or none at all.

how came these modern Allegorists of this Miracle to apply it as they do, and to make it a mystical Representation of the Ruin of the *Jewish* State? Did they take up this Notion of their own Heads, or did they borrow it of the Fathers? Why in all Probability they took the Hint from the Fathers; wherefore then don't they, what none of them do, cite and acknowledge their Authors for it? Because, like Men of Subtilty, they would be thought to devise it of themselves; for if they had quoted the Fathers for it, the Fathers would have oblig'd them, upon their Authority, to allegorise the rest of *Jesus*'s Miracles, in the way that I have interpreted some of them; but this would not have agreed with their Stomachs for many Reasons. No Thanks then to the aforsaid *Commentators* for their allegorical Application of this Miracle, which they are again to desert, or abide the Consequence of allegorising others also, which for their Interests and Reputations they will not do. Therefore let them return again to the Letter of this Miracle, and say for it, what is all that is to be said for it, with *Victor Antiochenus*, an Apostatical Writer of the fifth

fifth Century, (19) *that when we read this Paſſage of Scripture concerning the Figtree* Jeſus *curſed, we ought not curiouſly to enquire whether it was wiſely or juſtly done of* Jeſus, *or not; but we ought to contemplate and admire this Miracle, as well as that of* Jeſus's *drowning the Swine, notwithſtanding ſome think it void of the Face of Juſtice.* Ay, ay, our *Divines* muſt allegoriſe all *Jeſus*'s Miracles, or betake themſelves to this Opinion of *Victor*; which this *free-thinking* Age will hardly let them quietly reſt in. So, ſuppoſing our *Divines* to be, what they generally are, ſtill Miniſters of the Abſurdity of the Letter, I paſs to the Conſideration of the Authority of the Fathers, and to ſee, whether we can't learn of them this Parable of the Figtree.

Who or what is meant by the Figtree ſeems not to be agreed among the Fathers; or, more properly ſpeaking, they are not agreed, all of them to apply it always to

(19) Porro quando in hunc locum incidimus, nemo curiosè inquirat, aut anxie diſputet, juſtene an ſecus factum ſit; ſed Miraculum editum contempletur et admiretur. Nam de ſubmerſis Porcis quoq; nonnulli hanc quæſtionem moverant, factumq; juſtitiæ colore deſtitutum prædicare veriti non ſunt. *In Loc. Marci.*

one

one and the ſame Thing. Some, as (20) *Gregory* the *Great*, ſay Human Nature or Mankind is typified by the Figtree. Others, as (21) St. *Hilary*, ſay the *Jewiſh* Church or State is meant by it. Others, as (22) *Origen* ſay, it is a Type of the Church of Chriſt. So do the Fathers ſeem to be divided in their Opinions; but it is without any Difference or Inconſiſtency with each other. For as there is, according to the Fathers, Myſtery upon Myſtery in all the Actions of *Jeſus*; ſo I believe the Figtree here, as a Type, may be properly enough apply'd to the foreſaid three Purpoſes. And if the Fathers had been ask'd their Opinion in this Caſe, I dare ſay, they would have ſaid ſo too. This is certain that *Origen* (23) underſtands it as applicable to the *Jewiſh* as well as the *Chriſtian* Church. And St. *Auguſtin*, as Occaſion offers itſelf, takes it in the foreſaid three Senſes. When they underſtand it as a Type of all Mankind, they ſay that the *three Years* of its Un-

(20) Quid Arbor fici, niſi humanam naturam deſignet? *In Homil.* xxxi. (21) In Ficu, Synogogæ poſitum Exemplum eſt. *In Loc. Matt.*

(22) Abſit a nobis, ut, Jeſu veniente ad nos et volente manducare de ficu (*Eccleſiæ*) non inveniatur Fructus in ea. *In Matth. Tract.* xxx. (23) Poteſt autem ficus illa intelligi populus Circumciſionis. *Ibid.*

fruitfulneſs

fruitfulneſs are to be interpreted of the (24) *three grand Periods* of the World; the *one* before the Law of *Moſes*; *another* under the Law; and the *third* under the Goſpel; at the Concluſion of which *third* Period, as it was an ancient and common Opinion, *Jeſus* in Spirit would come to his Figtree of Mankind, and animadvert on them for their Unfruitfulneſs, not by any Deſtruction of human Nature, but by a Ceſſation of its Unfruitful State, which then will wither away, and be turn'd into a fruitful one againſt the grand Sabbath, or acceptable Year, which is the Year ſignified in the Parable, *that it is to be let alone to bring forth Fruit in.* They that underſtand the Figtree as a Type of the *Jewiſh* State, mean by the *three Years Jeſus* came to it, the *three Years* of his preaching among the *Jews*; at the End of which, after *Chriſt*'s Paſſion and Reſurrection, the *Jewiſh* State, like the Figtree, withered away, and, for its Unfruitfulneſs, was rooted up. They that underſtand the Figtree as a Figure of the Church of *Chriſt*, by the *three Years*, mean the apocalyptical

(24) Arbor ficulnea Genus humanum eſt,—— Triennium autem tria ſunt Tempora, unum ante Legem, alterum ſub Lege, tertium ſub gratia. *St. Auguſtin in Serm.* CX.

twelve

twelve hundred and ſixty Days (that is, three Years and a half) of the Church's barren and unfruitful State in the Wilderneſs, at the Concluſion of which, the Fathers ſay *Jeſus* will come again to his Church or Figtree, ſeeking Fruit on it.

Some perhaps may be ready here to interpoſe with a Queſtion, and ſay, how will *Jeſus* then come to his Church? I have carefully peruſed the Fathers upon this Queſtion, and can't find that they mean any more by *Chriſt*'s ſecond or ſpiritual Advent, than that clear *Truth*, right *Reaſon* and divine *Wiſdom* (which are the myſtical Names of *Jeſus*) will deſcend upon the Church, on the Clouds of the Law and the Prophets, to the Removal of her unfruitful and unprofitable Errors, and to enable her to bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit, againſt the grand Sabbath. Neither can any reaſonable Man conceive how otherwiſe (25) *the Lord ſhould come*, (not *with ten thouſand of his Saints*, as our Tranſlation has it, but) εν μυριασιν αγιαις αυτου, that is, as *Origen* interprets, *in his holy thouſands of* Allegoriſts ποιησαι κρισιν, *to criticiſe upon all* the Scripture, and to convince *Miniſters of the Letter* of their

(25) *Jude*, ver. 14.

abominable

abominable Errors, and of their horrid Blaſphemies ſpoken, preach'd, and printed againſt the Holy (Ghoſt or) Spirit of the Law and Prophets. As to that litteral and common Pulpit-Story (with all its Appendages) of *Jeſus*'s ſecond Coming on ætherial Clouds, as on a Woolſack, in his human, tho' glorious and majeſtick Appearance, for the Reſurrection of Mens Bodies, by Sound of a Trumpet, in the Audience of the Dead, *&c.* it is the moſt abſurd, nonſenſical and unphiloſophical, (ſuch groundleſs and worthleſs Stuff have the *Clergy* ſold and preach'd to God's People!) that ever was told againſt Reaſon, againſt prophetick and evangelical Scripture, and againſt other ancient and good Authority. It is no Place here to multiply Teſtimonies and Arguments to either of theſe Purpoſes, which my Readers, if they do but attend, will ſee no Occaſion for. But if our *Divines* ſhould think I have put a falſe Gloſs on the Text of St. *Jude* above, I have a Bundle of Arguments and Teſtimonies to produce in Defence of it, at their Service.

In the Parable of St. *Luke*, it is ſaid, *Lo, theſe three Years come I ſeeking Fruit on this Figtree*; as if *Jeſus* came annually and ſucceſſively for *three Years* together; but according to the Original, it ought to be

read, *Lo, it is three Years and I now come*, or *Lo, the three Years are now paſt, and I come.* And here it is to be noted, that whether we underſtand the Figtree, as a Figure of the Church in particular, or of Mankind in general; the myſtical Number of *three Years* will terminate about the ſame Time, againſt the Evangelical Sabbath, on which the Unfruitfulneſs of the Church, or of Mandind, according to the Fathers, is to have an End put to it.

And *Jeſus*, when he came to the Figtree; *found nothing thereon but Leaves only: So Jeſus*, when he comes to his Church, will find nothing in her but Leaves only. And what is here meant by Leaves? Let the Fathers, ſuch as (26) St. *Hilary*, St. *John* (27) *of Jeruſalem*, and (28) St. *Theophylact* tell us, who by Leaves underſtand a vain and empty Appearance of Wiſdom and good Works, or the Words and Letter of the Scriptures, which are the Leaves of the Oracle, without any Figs of

(26) Inveniet infœcundam, foliis tantomodo veſtitam, id eſt Verbis inanibus gloriantem, ſed fructibus vacuam, Operibus quippe bonis ſterilem. *In Loc. Matt.*

(27) Habentem folia et non fructus; Verba, non Senſus; Scripturas, non intelligentiam Scripturarum *In Loc. Marci.*

(28) Folia ſola habentem, hoc eſt, apparentem Litteram, non Fructus Spiritus. *In Loc. Matt.*

ſpiritus

ſpiritual Interpretations of them. And whether this ben't the Caſe of the Church at preſent, our *Divines* are to conſider. The Figs that *Jeſus* may be ſuppoſed to look for at his Coming, are not only the Fruits of the Spirit mention'd by St. *Paul*, but (29) *ſpiritual Interpretations* of the Scriptures, which St. *Jerome* (30) ſays are *myſtical Figs*; becauſe, as ripe Figs are ſweet to the Palate of our Mouths, ſo are they no leſs delicious to the Soul of Man.

But *Jeſus* is ſaid to be *hungry* after Figs: ſo will *Jeſus* in Spirit *hunger* for the myſtical Figs of his Church, that is, as *Origen* (31) rightly interprets, he will earneſtly deſire, like a Man that is hungry, the Fruits of the Spirit in his Church, which will be as grateful to him as Figs can be to a Man naturally. To underſtand this Expreſſion of *Jeſus*'s *Hunger* literally, is ſuch a mean Circumſtance of Life, that unleſs it be, what's next to impoſſible, neceſſarily introductory to ſome noble Tranſ-

(29) Quærens non Senſiles Fructus ſed intellectilem ex Lege et Prophetis dulcemq; Fœcunditatem. *Cæſarii in Dialog.* 40.

(30) Ficus ſunt dona dulciſſima Spiritus Sancti, Spiritualia dogmata et Scientia Scripturarum. *In Aggæ*; *Cap* ii.

(31) Eſuriit autem Jeſus ſemper in juſtis, volens manducare Fructum Spiritus Sancti in eis. *In Matt. Tract.* xxx.

action, it's unfit to be remember'd of a Saint in History. *Diogenes Laertius* would have disdain'd to mention such a frivolous Circumstance in the Life of a Philosopher as *this* of *Jesus*. But if we understand this *Hunger* in *Jesus* mystically, and figuratively of his Desires of the Fruits of the Spirit in his Church, it is sublime and noble; and the Emblem confessedly proper and instructive.

But *Jesus* is said to come to the Fig-tree at an unseasonable Time; *For the Time of Figs was not yet*; which Expression has been the Perplexity of *Commentators*, who with all their Wit and Sagacity can't get well over it. I shall not mention here all or any of their pretended Solutions of this Difficulty; but let us see whether we can't easily and at once unloose it. St. *Mark*'s Words are ου γαρ ην καιρος συκων, which are and have been commonly translated, *for the Time of Figs is not yet*. But if we change the *Point* into an *Interrogation*, and read thus, *for was it not the Time of Figs?* the Difficulty vanishes as certainly, as that it is absurd to suppose *Christ* should come to his Fig-tree and look for Fruit, when he could not reasonably expect any. This my Solution of this Difficulty certainly serves the Purpose of the mystical Interpretation;

on; and if it does not the litteral, I answer, we are not to heed the Letter, which seldom or never has any Sense or Truth in it. But, by the by, it does the litteral too, since there are no Grounds from the Text to think, what has been the common Opinion, that it was about the *Jewish* Passover that *Jesus* came to the Figtree. If this my Solution of the Difficulty don't please, I must say with (32) *Heinsius*, that it must be left as a Knot for *Elias* to untie; who, according to the (33) ancient *Jews*, is first to gather Fruits off this mystical Figtree, and present them to the intellectual Taste of Mankind. But, that my Solution is good, will appear by what follows.

And *Jesus* finding Leaves only says, in St. *Matthew*, to the Figtree, *Let no Fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever*; which (with its parallel Place in St. *Mark*) is in my Opinion a false Translation: The Original is, Μηκέτι εκ σου καρπος γενηται εις τον αιωνα, and ought to be

(32) Ad quem (Locum) intelligendum, ut oportet, expectandum esse Eliæ, ut nonnunquam loquuntur Veteres de Locis obscurissimis Adventum. *In Exercitat. Sac. Lib.* ii. *cap.* 6.

(33) Fructus dulces omne genus de arbore Vitæ comedendum præbebit Elias. *Apud Buxtorf. Synag. p.* 738.

english'd

engliſhed, *not as yet*, or *not untill now*, (that I came) *againſt the* (grand) *Age* (of the Sabbath) has Fruit grown on thee. So that the Miracle of *Jeſus* was to make the Figtree of the Church fruitful; and if her preceeding unfruitful State, which (in St. *Mark*) *Jeſus* is ſaid to curſe, or rather to devote to Ruin, waſted away, it was by Conſequence.

But what Time of Day was it that *Jeſus* came to the Figtree? It was in the *Morning*. And of what Day? That is uncertain as to the Letter, but according to the myſtical Extent of the *Three Years*, whether we underſtand the Figtree as a Type of the Church, or of all Mankind of all Ages, it will be on the *Morning* of the great Sabbath, when, upon the Appearance of the Light of Chriſt, like the Riſing of the Sun, an unfruitful and erroneous Church muſt needs wither away. And the Diſciples on the ſaid *Morning* will, as *Origen* (34) ſays, with their intellectual Eyes behold her waſte with Admiration. And then too, they under Chriſt *will do what is done to the Figtree*, of the Church, and *remove Mountains* of Anti-chriſtian Power, that exalt themſelves a-

(34) Oculis Spiritalibus viderunt Myſterium fici ſiccatæ. *Matt. Tract.* xvi.

gainſt

gainſt him, as the Fathers interpret, and I need not explain.

And what is meant by the Means, which St. *Luke* ſpeaks of, to make the Figtree of the Church fruitful on the Sabbatical Year; *the Year it is to be let alone to bear Fruit in?* There muſt be *digging about it*, that is (35) into the Earth of the Letter of the Scriptures, and *dunging* of it, that is calling (39) to Remembrance her Sins and Errors of the Time paſt, which rationally ſpeaking will make the Church to bring forth good Fruit.

After this Faſhion is the reſt of the Parable of the Figtree to be allegorized out of the Fathers. St. *Gregory* (37) the *Great*, and St. *Auguſtin*, make theſe two Stories or Parables, *viz.* of the Figtree, and of the Woman with her *Spirit of Infirmity*, as they are blended together in St. *Luke*, to be Figures of the ſame Myſtery. The

(35) Effodientes Literam Legis. *Cyril. Glaphyr.* L. 1. P 1.

(36) Mittitur ergo Cophinus Stercoris ad Radicem Arboris, quando pravitatis ſuæ Conſcientia tangitur memoria Cogitationis. *Gregor. M. in Hom.* xxxi.

(37) Sed hoc ſignificat Ficulnea infructuoſa, quod Mulier inclinata; et hoc Ficulnea reſervata, quod Mulier erecta. Hoc autem et octodecem Annorum Numero ſignatur, quod tertio die Dominus Vineæ Ficulneam veniſſe perhibetur. *In Homil* xxxi.

eighteen

eighteen Years of the Woman's Infirmity and the *three Years* of the Figtree's Unfruitfulneſs, they will have to be myſtically ſynchromical. And the Woman's *Incurvity* to the Earth is, they ſay, ſignificative of the ſame Thing with the *Unfruitfulneſs* of the Figtree. And the *Erection* of the Woman on the Sabbath is of the ſame Import with the *Reſervation* of the Tree for Fruitfulneſs on that Day. And let any one ſee, if they don't admirally agree, as I have interpreted theſe two Parables.

Before I diſmiſs this Story of the Figtree, I can't but adore the Providence of God, that the Miracle has been hitherto placed in the withering away of the Tree. If the Miracle had been a plain Story of a dead and wither'd Tree's being made to bring forth Leaves and Fruit on a ſudden; this would have been ſuch a manifeſtly ſupernatural Work, and ſo agreeable to modern Notioniſts about Miracles, that Mens Thoughts would have been ſo abſorpt in the Conſideration of the Letter, as they would never have extended them to the Contemplation of the Myſtery. And our Divines would have made ſuch a Noiſe, in our Ears of the Excellency and Marvellouſneſs of ſuch a Miracle, as that there would be no bearing of it. But

as

But as the *Evangeliſts* have in a good Meaſure ſuppreſs'd all mention of the after Fruitfulneſs of the Tree; and the Story, by Miſconſtruction, is clog'd with the foreſaid Difficulties and Abſurdities, we are of Neceſſity driven to the ſearch after Myſtery for good Senſe and Truth in it.

And thus have I ſpoken enough to the Miracle of *Jeſus*'s curſing the Figtree, which according to the Letter is a fooliſh and abſurd Story: But the myſtical Operation, of which the Letter is a Shadow, will be raviſhing, marvelous and ſtupendous; and not only a Proof of *Chriſt*'s Power and Preſence in his Church, but a Demonſtration of his *Meſſiahſhip*, in as much as an infinite Number of Prophecys upon Prophecys, will thereupon be diſcern'd to be accompliſh'd, or the Church can't bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit, that is Spiritual Interpretations of the Scriptures, like ripe Figs. And ſo I paſs to an

8. *Eighth* Miracle of *Jeſus*, and that is, (38) " of his healing a Man of an " Infirmity, of thirty eight Years Dura- " tion, at the Pool of *Bethesda*, that had " five Porches, in which lay a great Mul- " titude of impotent Folk, blind, halt, " withered, waiting the troubling of the

(38) *John*, Chap. v.

" Waters, upon the Deſcent of an An-
" gel, who gave a Sanative Virtue to them,
" to the curing of any one, be his Diſtem-
" per of what kind ſoever, who firſt
" ſtept down into them.

This whole Story is what our Saviour calls a *Camel* of a monſtrous Size for Abſurdities, Improbabilities and Incredibilities, which our *Divines*, and their implicit Followers of theſe laſt Ages, have ſwallowed without chewing; whilſt they have been ſtraining at *Knats* in Theology, and heſitating at frivolous and indifferent Things of the Church, of no Conſequence.

As to *Jeſus*'s Miracle in this Story, which conſiſted in his healing a Man, of no body knows what *Infirmity*, there neither is nor can be proved any Thing ſupernatural in it, or there had been an expreſs Deſcription of the Diſeaſe, without which it is impoſſible to ſay, there was a miraculous Cure wrought. As far as one may reaſonably gueſs, this Man's *Infirmity* was more *Lazyneſs* than *Lameneſs*, and *Jeſus* only ſhamed him out of his pretended Illneſs, by bidding him to take up his Stool and walk off, and not lie any longer, like a lazy Lubbard and Diſſembler, among the Diſeaſed, who were real Objects of Pity and Compaſſion: Or,

if

if he was no Deſſembler, he was only fancyfully ſick, and *Jeſus* by ſome proper and ſeaſonable Talk touch'd his Heart, to his Relief; and ſo, by the Help of his own Imagination, he was cured, and went his Way. This is the *worſt* that can be made of this *infirm* Man's Caſe; and the *beſt* that can be ſaid of *Jeſus*'s Power in the Cure of him, as will appear, by and by, upon Examination into it. But the other Parts of the Story of the healing Virtue of the Waters, upon the Deſcent of an Angel into them, is not only void of all good Foundation in Hiſtory, but is a Contradiction to common Senſe and Reaſon, as will be manifeſt after an Inquiry into the Particulars of it.

St. *John* was the beloved Diſciple of our Lord, and I hope he lov'd his Maſter; or he was worſe than an Heathen, who loves thoſe who love him: But this Story, and ſome others, that are peculiar to his Goſpel, ſuch as, of *Jeſus's telling the Samaritan Woman her Fortune*; of *his healing the blind Man with Eye-Salve made of Clay and Spittle*; Of *his turning Water into Wine for the Uſe of Men, who had before well drank*; and of *his raiſing Lazarus from the Dead*, are enough to tempt us to think, that he wilfully deſign'd, either to blaſt the Reputation of his Maſter,

or to try how far the Credulity of Men, who through blind Love were running apace into Chriſtianity, might be impoſed on; or he had never related ſuch idle Tales, which, if the *Prieſthood*, who ſhould be the philoſophical Part of Mankind, had not been amply hired into the Belief of them, would certainly have been rejected with Indignation and Scorn before now.

St. *John* wrote his Goſpel many Years after the other *Evangeliſts*: What then ſhould have been his peculiar Buſineſs? Certainly nothing more, than to add ſome remarkable Paſſages of Life, to *Jeſus*'s Honour, which they had omitted; and to confirm the Truths which they had before reported of him. But St. *John* is ſo far from doing this, that the Stories, he has particularly added, are not only derogatory to the Honour of *Jeſus*, but ſpoil his Fame for a Worker of Miracles, which the other *Evangeliſts* would raiſe him to. By reading the other *Evangeliſts*, one would think, that *Jeſus* was a Healer of all manner of Diſeaſes, however incurable by Art and Nature, and that where-ever he came, all the ſick and the maim'd (excepting a few Infidels) were perfectly cured by him. But this Story before us will be like a Demonſtration, that *Jeſus* was no ſuch Worker of Miracles and Healer

Healer of Diſeaſes, as he is commonly believed to have been, and that he wrought not near the Number of Cures, he is ſuppoſed to have done, much leſs any great ones. The beſt Conception that an impartial Reader of the Goſpel can form of *Jeſus*, is, that he was a tolerable good natural *Orator*, and could handſomely harangue the People off hand, and was according to the Philoſophy of the Times a good *Cabaliſt*; and his Admirers finding him endewed with the Gift of Utterance, which was thought by them more than human, they fancy'd he muſt have the Gift of healing too, and would have him to exerciſe it; which he did with Succeſs, upon the Fancies and Imaginations of many, who magnified his divine Power for it. And the Apoſtles afterwards, to help forward the Credulity and Deluſion of the People, amplified his Fame with extravagant Aſſertions and ſtrange Stories of Miracles, paſſing the Belief of conſiderate and wiſe Men. Whether this Repreſentation of the Caſe, according to the *Letter* of the Goſpels, be falſe and improbable, let my *Readers* judge by the Story before us, which I come now to diſſect, and make a particular Examination into the ſeveral Parts of it. Accordingly it is to be obſerv'd,

Firſt,

First, that this Story of the *Pool* of *Bethesda*, abstractedly considered from *Jesus*'s Cure of an infirm Man at it, has no good Foundation in History: It merits no Man's Credit, nor will any reasonable Person give any heed to it. St. *John* is the only Author that has made any mention of this Story; and tho' his Authority may be good, and better than another Man's in Relation to the Words and Actions of *Jesus*, in as much as he was most familiar and conversant with him; yet, for foreign Matters, that have no immediate Respect to *Jesus*'s Life, he's no more to be regarded than another *Historian*, who, if he palm upon his *Readers* an improbable Tale of senseless and absurd Circumstances, will have his Authority questioned, and his Story pry'd into by the Rules of *Criticism*, and rejected or received as it is found worthy of Belief and Credit. If there had been any Truth in this Story before us, I cannot think but *Josephus* or some other *Jewish* Writers, it is so remarkable, peculiar and astonishing an Instance of the Angelical Care and Love to the distressed of *Jerusalem*, would have spoken of it: But I don't find they have; or our modern *Commentators* would have refer'd to them, as to a Testimony of the Credibility of the

Gospel-

Gospel-History. *Josephus* has professedly written the History of the *Jewish* Nation, in which he seems to omit nothing that makes for the Honour of his Country, or for the Manifestation of the Providence of God over it. He tells us of the Conversation of Angels with the Patriarchs and Prophets, and intermixes Extra-Scriptural Traditions, as he thought them fit to be transmitted to Posterity. How came he then and all other *Jewish* Writers to forget this Story of the Pool of *Bethesda?* I think, we may as well suppose that a Writer of the natural History of *Somersetshire* would neglect to speak of the medicinal Waters of *Bath*, as *Josephus* should omit that Story, which, if true, was a singular Proof of God's distinguishing Care of his peculiar People, or an Angel had never been frequently, as we suppose, sent to this Relief of the Diseased amongst them. Is then St. *John*'s single Authority enough to convey this Story down to us? Some may say, that there are several Prodigies, as well as political Events of ancient Times, that, tho' they are reported but by one Historian, meet with Credit; and why may not St. *John*'s Testimony be equal to another Writer's? I grant it; and tho' it is hardly probable but that this Story, if true, before

us,

us, must have had the Fortune to be told by others; yet St. *John*'s single Authority shall pass sooner than another Man's, if the Matter be in itself credible and well circumstanc'd. But were it is blindly, imperfectly and with monstrously incredible Circumstances related, like this before us, it ought to be rejected. Which brings me,

Secondly, To ask, what was the true Occasion of the Angel's Descent into this Pool? Was it to wash and bath himself? Or, was it to impart an healing Quality to the Waters for some one diseased Person? The Reason, that I ask the first of these two Questions, is, because some ancient Readings of v. 4. say (39) the Angel ελουετο *was washed*, which supposes some bodily Defilement or Heat contracted in the Cælestial Regions, that wanted Refrigeration or Purgation in these Waters: But how absurd such a Thought is, needs no Proof. To impart then compassionately an healing Power to the Waters for the Benefit of the Diseased was the sole Design of the Angel's Descent into them. And God forbid, that any should philosophically debate the Matter, and enquire how naturally the Waters deriv'd that Virtue from the Angel's corporal

(39) Vid. Milli. Nov. Test. *In Loc.*

Presence

Preſence. The Thing was providential and miraculous, our *Divines* will ſay, and ſo let it paſs. But I may fairly ask, why one diſeaſed Perſon only at a Time reap'd the Benefit? Or why the whole Number of impotent Folks were not at once healed? I have a notable Anſwer preſently to be given to theſe Queſtions; but I am afraid beforehand, our *Divines* will not approve of it: Therefore they are to give one of their own, and make the Matter conſiſtent with the Goodneſs and Wiſdom of God; or the ſaid Queſtions ſpoil the Credit of the Story, and make an idle and ridiculous Romance of it. And when their Hands are in, to make, what is impoſſible, a ſatisfactory Anſwer to the ſaid Queſtions; I wiſh, that, for the ſake of *Orthodoxy*, they would determine, whether the Angel deſcended with his Head or his Heels foremoſt, or whether he might not come ſwauping upon his Breaſt into the Waters, like a Gooſe into a Horſe-pond. But,

Thirdly, How often in the Week, the Month or the Year did the Angel vouchſafe his Deſcent into the Pool? And for how many Ages before *Chriſt*'s Advent, and why not ſince and even (40)

(41) Quare modo non movetur Aqua? *St. Ambroſ. de Sacrament. Lib. C. 2.*

now, was this Gracious and Angelical Favour granted? St. *John* ſhould have been particular as to theſe Points, which he could not but know Philoſophers would be curious to enquire about. If it was but once in the Year, as St. *Chryſoſtom* (41) hints, little Thanks are due to him for his Courteſy. One would think ſometimes, that his Deſcent was frequent; or ſuch a Multitude of impotent Folk, variouſly diſorder'd had never attended on it. And again at other Times, one would think, that his Deſcent was ſeldom, or the Diſeaſed as faſt as they came, which could not be faſter than the Angel could dabble himſelf in the Waters, had been charitably diſmiſſed with reſtor'd Health. Here then is a Defect in St. *John*'s Story, and a *Block*, at which wiſe and conſiderate Free-Thinkers will ſtumble. But,

Fourthly, How came it to paſs, that there was not better Care taken, either by the Providence of God, or of the Civil Magiſtrates of *Jeruſalem* about the Diſpoſal of the Angelical Favour to this or that poor Man, according to his Neceſſities or Deſerts: But that he, who

(41) Εις μονος του ενιαυτου εθεραπευετο. *In Serm. contra Eberietatem.*

could

could fortunately catch the Favour, was to have it. Juſt as he who runs faſteſt obtains the Prize: So here the Diſeaſed, who was moſt nimble and watchful of the Angel's Deſcent, and could firſt plunge himſelf into the Pool, carried off the Gift of Sanation. An odd and a merry Way of conferring a divine Mercy. And one would think that the Angels of God did this for their own Diverſion, more than to do good to Mankind. Juſt as ſome throw a Bone among a Kennel of Hounds, for the Pleaſure of ſeeing them quarrel for it; or as others caſt a Piece of Money among a Company of Boys for the Sport of ſeeing them ſcramble for it: So was the Paſtime of the Angels here. It was the Opinion of ſome Heathens, that *Homines ſunt Luſus Deorum*, the Gods ſport themſelves with the Miſeries of Mankind; but I never thought, before I conſidered this Story, that the Angels of the God of the *Jews* did ſo too. But if they delighted in it, rare ſport it was to them, as could be to a *Town-Mobb*. For as the poor and diſtreſſed Wretches were not to be ſuppoſed to be of ſuch a polite Converſation, as in Complaiſance to give place to their betters, or in Compaſſion to make way for the moſt miſerable; but upon the Sight

or Sound of the Angel's Fall into the Pool, would without Reſpect of Perſons ſtrive who ſhould be firſt: So thoſe who were behind and unlikely to be cured, would like an unciviliz'd *Rabble*, puſh and preſs all before them into it. What a Number then, of ſome hundreds perhaps, of poor Creatures were at once tumbled into the Waters to the Diverſion of the City Mob, as well as of God's Angels? And if one aroſe out of it, with the Cure of his Diſeaſe, the reſt came forth like drown'd *Rats*, to the Laughter of the foreſaid Spectators; and it was well if there was not ſometimes more Miſchief done, than the healing of *one* could be of Advantage, to thoſe People. Believe then this Part of the Story, let him that can. If any Angel was concern'd in this Work, it was an Angel of *Satan* who delights in Miſchief; and if he healed *one* upon ſuch an Occaſion, he did it by way of Bait, to draw others into Danger of Life and Limb. But as our *Divines* will not, I ſuppoſe, bear the Thoughts of it's being a bad Angel; ſo I leave them to conſider upon our Reaſonings, whether it was credible that either a good or a bad Angel was concerned, and deſire them to remember to give me a better Reaſon, why but *one* at a Time was healed.

If

If any Pool or Ciſtern of Water about this City of *London* was ſo bleſſed with the Deſcent of an Angel to ſuch an End, the Magiſtrates, ſuch is their Wiſdom, would, if God did not direct, take care of the prudent Diſpoſal of the Mercy to the beſt Advantage of the Diſeaſed. And if they ſold it to an infirm *Lord* or *Merchant*, who could give for it moſt Money, to be diſtributed among other Poor and diſtreſs'd People, would it not be wiſely done of them? To ſuppoſe they would leave the Angelick Favour to the Struggle of a Multitude, is abſurd and incredible. And why then ſhould we think otherwiſe of the Magiſtrates of *Jeruſalem*? Away then with the Letter of this Story! And if this be not enough to confute it. Then,

Fifthly, Let us conſider, to its farther Confutation, who and what were the impotent Folk, that lay in the Porches of *Bethesda*, waiting the Troubling of the Waters. St. *John* ſays they were *Blind*, *Halt*, *Withered*, and as ſome Manuſcripts (42) have it, *Paralyticks*. And what did any of theſe there? How could any of them be ſuppoſed to be nimble enough of Foot to ſtep down firſt into the Waters, and carry off the Prize of Sanation, be-

(42) Vid. Milli. Nov. Teſt. *In Loc.*

fore

fore many others of various Diſtempers? Tho' the troubled Waters might beof ſuch medicinal Force as to heal a Man of whatſoever Diſeaſe he had; yet none of the foreſaid Perſons for want of good Feet and Eyes could expect the Benefit of it. Tho' the Ears of the Blind might ſerve him to hear, when the Angel plump't like a Stone into the Waters, yet through want of Sight for the guidance of his Steps, he would by others be joſtled out of the right Way down into them. And if the Lame had good Eyes to diſcern the the Deſcent of the Angel, yet Feet were all in all to this Purpoſe: Conſequently theſe impotent Folk, ſpecified by St. *John*, might as well have ſtay'd at Home, as reſorted to *Bethesda* for Cure. I know not what Fools the Diſeaſed of *Jeruſalem* of old might be, but if there was ſuch a Prize of Health to be ſtrove for, by the Diſtempered of this City, I appeal to all Men of common Senſe, whether the *Blind*, the *Lame*, the *withered* and *Paralyticks* would offer to put in for it. St. *John* then forgot himſelf, or elſe blundered egregiouſly, or put the Banter upon us, to try how far an abſurd Tale would paſs upon the World with Credit. There might be, if there was any litteral Senſe in the Story, many of other Diſtempers, but there could

be

be neither *blind*, *halt* nor *withered*, without *such an Absurdity*, as absolutely disparages the Story, blasts the Credit of the *Relator*, or rather brings to mind the Assertion of St. *Ambrose*, that the Letter of the *New* as well as the *Old Testament* lies abominably. If what I have here said does not overthrow the Letter of this Story; Then what I have,

Sixthly, To add, will do it more effectually, and that is, of the *certain Man*, *that had an Infirmity thirty and eight Years*, and lay at this Pool for an Opportunity to be cured of it. Tho' these *thirty* and *eight* Years are, in our *English* Translation prædicated of this Man's Infirmity, yet more truely, according to the Original, are they spoken of the Time he lay there; and the Fathers so understood St. *John*'s Words. What this Man's Infirmity was, we are uncertain: For ἀσθενεια *Weakness* or *Infirmity* is a general Name of all Distempers, and may be equally apply'd to one as well as to another: Whereupon, tho' we can't certainly say from this Man's Infirmitiy, that he was a Fool to lay there so long, expecting that Cure, which it was impossible for him to obtain; yet what he says to our Saviour, *I have no Man, when the Waters are troubled to put me into the Pool, but while I am coming, another steppeth down before*

before me, does imply his Folly sufficiently, or rather the Incredibility of the whole Story. What then did this *infirm* Man at this Pool, if he had neither Legs of his own good enough, nor a Friend to assist him, in the Attainment of Sanation? Was he not a Fool, if it was possible for any to be so great a one, for his Patience? Would it not have been as wisely done of him to wait, in the Fields so long, the Falling of the Sky, that he might catch Larks? The Fathers say, this Man's *Infirmity* was the *Palsy*; but whether they said so for the Sake of the Mystery, or to expose the Letter, I know not. But that Distemper after *thirty* and *eight* Years Duration, and Increase, if it was more curable than another at first, had in that time undoubtedly so weakened and render'd him uncapable to struggle with others for this Relief, that it is without Sense and Reason to think he should wait so long for it. Our *Divines*, if they so please, may commend this Man for his Patience, but after a few Years, or rather a few Days Experience, another Man would have been convinc'd of the Folly and Vanity of his Hopes, and returned Home. If he could not put in for this Benefit, with Prospect of Success in his more youthful Days, when the Distemper was young too, much

much leſs Reaſon had he to hope for it in his old Age, after *thirty* and *eight Years* Affliction, unleſs he dream'd of, what was not to be imagined, an Opportunity, without Moleſtation and Competition, to go off with it. Whatever then our *Divines* may think of this Man and his Patience, I will not believe there ever was ſuch a Fool; and for this Reaſon will not ſuppoſe St. *John* could litterally ſo romance, unleſs he meant to bambouzle Mankind into the Belief of the greateſt Abſurdity. A Man that Lies with a Grace to deceive others, makes his Story ſo hang together, as to carry the Face and Appearance of Truth along with it; which this of St. *John*, that for many Ages has been ſwallowed, for the Reaſon before us, has not. But what is the worſt of all againſt this Story is,

Seventhly, That which follows, and abſolutely deſtroys the Fame and Credit of *Jeſus* for a Worker of Miracles *And* V. 1, 2, 3. *Jeſus went up to Jeruſalem, where there was by the Sheep-Market, a Pool, called Bethesda, having five Porches, in which lay a great Multitude of impotent Folk, blind, halt, withered.* Why then did not *Jeſus* heal them? Here was a rare Opportunity for the Diſplay of his Healing and Almighty Power; and why

did he not exercise it, to the Relief of that Multitude of impotent Folk? If he could not cure them, there's an End of his Power of Miracles; and if he would not, it was want of Mercy and Compassion in him. Which way soever we take this Case, it turns to the Dishonour of the Holy *Jesus*. What then was the Reason, that of so great a Multitude of diseased People, *Jesus* exerted his Power, and extended his Mercy, on only *one* poor Paralytick? St. *Augustin* (44) puts this Question and Objection into my Mouth; and tho' neither He nor I start it for the Service of Infidelity, but to make Way for the Mystery; yet I know not why *Infidels* may not make Use of it, till Ministers of the Letter can give a satisfactory Answer and Solution to it.

The Evangelists, *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, tell such Stories of *Jesus*'s healing Power, as would incline us to think he cured all where-ever he came. He *heal'd*, they say, *all Manner* of Diseases among the People, and they make mention of particular Times and Places, where all the Diseased were healed by him, which

(44) Tot jacebant et unus curatus, cum posset uno Verbo omnes erigere. Quid ergo intelligendum est, nisi quia Potestas et Bonitas illa magis agebat, *&c. In Loc. Johan.*

Assertions

Aſſertions imply, that *Jeſus*'s healing Power was moſt extenſive and (excepting to an hard-hearted and unbelieving *Phariſee* now and then) univerſal; ſo far that it might be queſtion'd, whether any died, during the Time of his Miniſtry, in the Places where he came: And our *Divines* have ſo harangued on *Jeſus*'s Miracles, as would confirm us in ſuch an Opinion: But this Story in St. *John* confutes and confounds all. St. *John* in no Place of his Goſpel talks of *Jeſus*'s healing of many, nor of all manner of Diſeaſes, much leſs of all that were Diſeaſed; which, if it be not like a Contradiction to the other *Evangeliſts*, is ſome Diminution of their Authority, and enough to make us ſuſpect, that they ſtretch'd much in praiſe of their Maſter, and ſaid more to his Honour than was ſtrictly true. But this Place before us is a flat Contradiction to them, and *Jeſus* is not to be ſuppoſed to heal many in any Place, much leſs all manner of Diſeaſes, or he had never let ſuch a Multitude of poor Wretches paſs without the Exerciſe of his Power and Pity on them. Some good Reaſon then muſt be given for *Jeſus*'s Conduct here, and ſuch a one as will adjuſt it to the Reports of the other Evangeliſts; or *Infidels* will think, that either

they romanc'd for the Honour of their Maſter, or that St. *John* in Spite told this Story to the Degradation of him. I can conceive no better of this Matter according to the Letter.

The *Biſhop* of *Lichfield* very remarkably ſays, (45) *that Jeſus where-ever he went, healed all that came to him without Diſtinction, the impotent, halt, withered.* He certainly had this Text of St. *John* in his Eye, when he ſaid ſo, becauſe *Impotent*, *Halt*, *Withered*, are only mention'd here, where Jeſus cured *none* of them: Whereupon if his *Lordſhip* had made but a marginal Reference to this Text, it would have been the beſt Jeſt and Banter, with a Sneer, that ever was put upon *Jeſus* and his Power of Miracles: As it is, it's a very good one, and I deſire my Readers to take Notice of it, that his Lordſhip may not loſe the Credit and Praiſe of it. It's for ſuch Circumſpection of Thought, Exactneſs of Expreſſion, and Acuteneſs of Wit, that I admire that *Prelate*, and muſt needs ſay of him, whether he ever be tranſlated to *Canterbury* or *York*, or not, that he's an *arch* Biſhop.

(45) Defence of Chriſtianity, P. 415.

But

But to return and go on. The Conduct of *Jeſus*, to all Appearance, is not only blameable, his Power of healing diſputable, and his Mercy indefenſible, for that he cured but *one* infirm Man out of a Multitude, at *Bethesda*, but,

Eightly, and laſtly, it may reaſonably be queſtioned, whether he wrought any Miracle in the healing of this *one* Man. Miracles (to ſay nothing of the ridiculous Diſtinction between divine and diabolical ones) are Works done out of the Courſe of Nature, and beyond the Imitation of human Art or Power. Now whether the Cure of this infirm Man can be brought under this Definition of a Miracle, may be doubted. What this Man's *Infirmity*, which is a general Name for all Diſtempers, was, we know not. How then can we ſay he was miraculouſly cured, unleſs we knew his Diſeaſe to be incurable by Art, which none can affirm? The worſt that we know of this Man's Caſe, is, that it was of a long Continuance, no leſs than of *eight* and *thirty* Years: And the *Biſhop* of *Lichfield* and others in their florid Harangues of *Jeſus*'s Works, make the Cure of ſuch Chronical Diſeaſes to be miraculous: But why ſo? Many Inſtances may be given of Infirmities of human Nature, of a long Duration,

ration, which in Time, and especially in old Age, wear off. If such Infirmites don't occur to the Memory of our *Divines*, I could put them in Mind of them. And who knows but this was the Case of this impotent Man, whose Infirmity *Jesus* observing to be wearing off, bid him to be gone, and take up his Couch, for he would soon be made whole.

The Fathers indeed call this Man's Infirmity the *Palsy*, which in truth is generally worse than better by Time, and after *thirty* and *eight* Years, must needs be very deplorable, and incurable without a Miracle. But why do they call it the Palsy? They have no Authority for it from the Text, without which, as our litteral *Doctors* will not subscribe to their Opinions in other Cases; so why should I here? In short, the Fathers had never call'd it the *Palsy*, but for the sake of the Mystery; and I am not bound to own *that* to have been the Distemper, any more than it was want of Legs; for that would be making of Miracles for *Jesus*, without Reason and Authority.

If *Jesus* here had healed the whole *Multitude of impotent Folk*; without Enquiry what Numbers there might be of them, I should have believed that he wrought there many great Miracles, in as much

much as in ſuch a great Multitude, there muſt needs, in all Probability, be ſome incurable by Art or Nature: But ſince he cured only this *one* Man, it affords Matter of Speculation, whether he was the *moſt* or the *leaſt* diſeaſed amongſt them. Our *Divines*, for the ſake of the Miracle, may poſſibly ſuppoſe him to be the moſt grievouſly afflicted of any; but *Infidels*, on the other hand, will ſay, not ſo: but with their Cavils will urge that this infirm Man was either a Diſſembler, whom *Jeſus* ſhamed out of his pretended Diſeaſe, or that he was only hippiſh, and fancyfully more than really diſtemper'd of a long Time, whom *Jeſus* by ſuitable Exhortations and Admonitions, working upon his Imagination, perſuaded into a Belief of his Cure, and bid him to walk off. Certain it is, that *Infidels* will ſay, it was not a Power of Miracles in *Jeſus* which heal'd him, or he had uſed it then and there for the Sanation of others alſo.

And thus have I finiſh'd my Invective againſt the Letter of this Story; which, if any are offended at, they enjoy, what is the moſt reaſonable Thing in the World, the ſame Liberty to write for the Letter, which I have uſed againſt it: And ſo I paſs to the Conſideration of the Opini-

ons

ons and Expoſitions of the Fathers on this ſtrange Story.

The Fathers, upon whoſe Authority I form'd my preceding Invective againſt the Letter, ſo univerſally betake themſelves to the myſtical Interpretation of this Story, that it may be queſtion'd, whether any of them, more than myſelf, believ'd any Thing at all of the Letter of it. St. *Chryſoſtom*, who is as much a litteral Interpreter of the Scriptures as any of them, here intirely diſcards the Letter, ſaying admirably thus, (46) *what a ſtrange Way and Story of healing the Diſeaſed is here? but what is the Myſtery of it? that we are to look to. The Matter could not be ſo ſimply and unadviſedly tranſacted litterally, as it is related. There muſt be ſomewhat future here, as by a Type and Figure, ſignify'd; or the Story, it is ſo incredible in itſelf, will give Offence to many.* St. *Chryſoſtom* was certainly in the right on't; and I wonder, for which no Reaſon but want of Liberty can be

(46) Quis hic Curationis modus? quid hoc nobis myſterium ſignificatur? non απλως nec εικη hæc, ſed futura nobis, tanquam imagine et figura quadam deſcribuntur, ne res nimium incredibilis et inexpectata, accedente fidei Virtute, Multitudinis Animos offenderet. *In Loc. Johan.*

given

given, that *Infidels* have not before now, with their Jeſts and Cavils, ridiculed this Story. St. *Auguſtin*, to the ſame Purpoſe, ſays, (47) *Can any one believe, that theſe Waters of Bethesda were wont to be troubled in this Faſhion, and that there was not Myſtery, and a ſpiritual Signification in it?* Yes, I could tell St. *Auguſtin*, that our modern *Divines* ſeem to believe it, tho' he, if he was now alive, would laugh at them for it. But to come to the profound Myſtery ſignified by this Story, which to uſe the Words of (48) St. *Auguſtin*, as God ſhall enable me, I will now ſpeak to.

Our *Engliſh* Verſion ſays, *There is at Jeruſalem by the Sheep-Market, a Pool.* How our *Tranſlators* came by the Notion of a *Market* here, I can't imagine, ſince there is nothing to favour it in the Original, which ſtands thus, επι τη προβατικη κολυμβηθρα: By κολυμβηθρα, the Fathers underſtand (49) Baptiſm, or the ſpiritual *La-*

(47) Aqua turbata —— credas hoc Angelica Virtute fieri ſolere, non tamen ſine ſignificante aliquo Sacramento? *In Loc. Johan.*

(48) Cujus Rei et cujus ſigni profundum myſterium, quantum Dominus donare dignatur, lequar ut potero. *Ibid.*

(49) Piſcina illa Baptiſmum deſignat. *Theophyl. In Loc.* Quænam igitur hæc deſcriptio? Futurum erat Baptiſma plenum maximæ Poteſtatis et Gratiæ purgaturum peccata. *Chryſoſt. in Loc.*

ver of Regeneration; and who is that for, but the Flock of Chriſt, ſignified by προβατικη? So we have another and clearer Interpretation of theſe two Words. And as to *Bethesda*, that is a myſtical Name of the Church, which according to the Signification of *Bethesda*, is the Houſe of Grace. And if it is ſaid to be at *Jeruſalem*, it is not to be underſtood of the Old *Jeruſalem*, but of the *New* and Apoſtolical *Jeruſalem*, at the Entrance into which the Flock of Chriſt will be baptiz'd by the Waters of the Spirit, as in myſtical Laver.

Bethesda is ſaid to have five *Porches*, that is, as the Fathers (50) agree, the five Books of *Moſes*, which are as ſo many Doors of Entrance into the Houſe of Wiſdom, or of the Grace of *Chriſt*.

At theſe *five Porches* of the five Books of Moſes lay *a great Multitude of impotent Folk, blind, halt, withered.* And who are theſe myſtically? The ignorant, erroneous, and unſtable in Faith and Principle, as the Fathers often underſtand them ſpiritually. And what is the Reaſon of theſe their myſtical Diſeaſes? Becauſe, as

(50) Per quinque Porticus, quinque Libros Moſis intelligo, St. *Theophil. Antioch. in Loc.* Quinque Porticus ſunt quinque Libri Moſis. St. *Auguſt. in Loc.*

St.

St. *Auguſtin* (51) and other Fathers ſay, they reſt on the Letter of the Law, which throws them into various Errors, like Diſeaſes, of different Kinds, of which they can't be cured without the Deſcent of the Spirit, like an Angel, to inſtruct them myſtically to interpret.

With theſe impotent Folk lay *a certain Man who had an Infirmity.* And who is this infirm Man? Mankind in general, ſay St. *Cyril* (52) and (53) St. *Auguſtin.* And what is his Infirmity? The Fathers call it the (54) *Palſy*, becauſe of his Inſtability, and Unſteadineſs in Faith and Principles, which is now the Caſe of of Mankind. St. *John* calls it ἀσθενειαν *a Weakneſs*, which being a general Name

(51) Moſis quinque Libros ſcripſit, ſed in quinque Porticibus Piſcinam cingentibus languidi jacebant, et curari non poterant. Vide quomodo manet littera, convincens eum non ſalvans iniquum. Illis enim quinque Porticibus, in figura quinque Librorum prodebantur potius quam ſanabantur ægroti. Ergo quicunque amatis litteram ſine gratia, in Porticibus remanebitis, ægri eritis, jacentes non convaleſcentes, de littera enim præſumitis. *In Pſal.* lxx.

(42) Eſt Figura Populi in ultimis temporibus ſanandi. *In Loc. Johan.*

(53) Languidus ille, de quo in Evangelio legimus, quia jacebat, Typum Generis humani habere videbatar. *In Serm.* cclxxiv, *Append.*

(54) Paralyticum qui juxta Natatoriam jacebat. *Irenæi. Lib.* ii. Cap. 22.

of all Diſtempers, we can't gueſs what might be here the ſpecifical one. But reaſonably ſpeaking, according to the Rule of Interpretation, this Man's *Infirmity* is the ſame with the Woman's *Spirit of Infirmity*, and that is a Weakneſs at the Spirit of Prophecy, which Mankind, as well as the Woman of the Church, is to be cured of in the Perfection of Time.

And how long did this Man with his Infirmity lay in theſe Porches of *Betheſda? Thirty eight Years:* So has Mankind with his Weakneſs at the Spirit of Prophecy lay eight and thirty (hundred) (55) Years, reckoning two thouſand under the Law, and eighteen hundred ſince under the Goſpel. St. *Auguſtin* (56) has an ingenious and more myſtical way of Computation of theſe *thirty and eight Years*, which pleaſes me too, but poſſibly ſome Readers may not ſo eaſily apprehend it, unleſs they are well acquainted with the Myſtery of Prophetical Numbers.

(55) Tempus et Annus ſunt centum Anni. *Tichonii in Reg.* 53.

(56) Quod autem triginta et octo Annos in Languoribus poſitus erat, do illo Quadraginta numero, quem ſupra diximus duo minus habens; et quæ ſunt iſta duo, niſi duo præcepta, dilectio Dei et Proximi. Iſta duo, in quibus tota Lex pendet et Prophetæ, ſi non habuerit, languidus et Paralyticus jacet. *In Pſ.* lxxxiii.

And

And how is Mankind to be cured of his Infirmity at the Spirit of Prophecy? By being inſtructed, by the Spirit of Truth, who is to come at the Concluſion of the ſaid thirty and eight myſtical Years, *to ariſe and take up his bed and walk*, that is, to raiſe his Thoughts to the Contemplation of the divine Myſteries of the Law, and to lift up his Bed of the Letter, on which he has hitherto *reſted*, into a ſublime Senſe, and then he will walk uprightly and ſteadily in the Faith, without wavering like a Paralytick.

And at what Seaſon did *Jeſus* come to this infirm Man? It was at a Feaſt of the *Jews*. *Irenæus*, *Chryſoſtom*, *Theophylact*, and *Cyril* call it the Feaſt of Penticoſt. And the grand Feaſt of Penticoſt is, as St. *Cyril* (57) ſays upon the Place, at the Perfection of Time, the Time of the Evangelical Sabbath, and of *Jeſus*'s ſpiritual Advent, which will be a Time of feaſting on intellectual and divine Myſteries, of ſeeing Viſions and of dreaming Dreams; conſequently at that Time, as the ancient *Jews* and Fathers aſſert, Mankind will be cured of this Infirmity at the Spirit of Prophecy.

(57) Quod autem ſub finem Hebdomadum Sanctæ Pentecoſtes ipſe revertitur Hieroſolymam, figuratè et ænigmatice ſignificat futurum noſtri Salvatoris Reverſionem ultimis præſentis ævi temporibus. *In Lec. Johan.*

And

And this too is the *certain Seaſon, that the Angel will deſcend and trouble the Waters.* By Angel is here meant (58) the Spirit of Chriſt. And by Waters the Fathers underſtand, (59) the People of all Nations. But how will the Deſcent of the Spirit of Truth, like an Angel, trouble theſe Waters, that is, give any Moleſtations and Diſturbance to the People? Is there not a Miſtake in the Oracle? If the *Clergy* will be but greater Lovers of Truth than of their Intereſts; if they, who ſhould be Teachers of Forbearance of one another in Love, will but keep their Temper, there would be found a miſtake in it. But alas!

Laſtly, The *Jews*, as is intimated, ſeem to have been mov'd with Indignation at the Cure of the infirm Man, ſaying to him, v. 10. *it is the Sabbath, it is not lawful for thee to carry thy Bed*; which litterally could not be true. The *Jews* were not ſuch preciſe Obſervers of the Sabbath; nor *ſo ſtupid and fooliſh*, as St. *Cyril*, (60) ſays, as to

(58) Turbabat Angelus, --- dictus eſt Dominus magni conſilii Angelus. *Auguſtin in Serm.* cxxv *Sect.* 3.

(59) Turbavit Aquam, id eſt, turbavit Populum. *Ejuſdem in Pſ.* cii.

(60) Sabbatum eſt et Grabatum non licet tollere. Quid ſtupidius aut inertius eſſe poteſt? *In Loc. Johan.*

think

think the taking up and carrying a Stool to be a Breach of it. But myſtically, it is to be fear'd, this will be moſt true, and that the *Clergy*, who would be *Jews* inwardly, and the Circumciſion in Spirit, will be bitter Enemies to Man's Exaltation of his Couch of the Letter of the Scriptures on or againſt the Evangelical Sabbath, and will make it, if poſſible, an *unlawful* Work; becauſe it will bring to them Shame, Diſhonour and Loſs of Intereſts along with it.

After this Manner is every other Circumſtance of this Story to be allegorically apply'd out of the Fathers. The Moral or Myſtery of the whole, in ſhort, is this, that at the Perfection of Time, ſignified by the *Sabbath*, the *Pentecoſt*, the End of *thirty eight Years*, the Spirit of Truth will deſcend on Mankind, to their Illumination in Prophecy, and to the healing of their *Errors*, call'd *Diſeaſes*; which is admirably repreſented by the Parable before us, that according to the Letter has neither Reaſon nor common Senſe in it.

And thus have I ſpoken to *eight* of the Miracles of *Jeſus*; and whether I have not ſhew'd them, in whole or Part, according to the Propoſition before us, to

conſiſt

consist of Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities; and whether they are not prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what will be mysteriously, and more wonderfully done by *Jesus*, I appeal to my *Readers*.

After another Discourse of some other Miracles, I intend to take into Examination the several Stories of *Jesus*'s raising of the Dead as of *Lazarus*, *Jairus*'s Daughter, and the Widow's Son of *Naim*; which reputedly are *Jesus*'s grand Miracles; but, for all the seeming Greatness and Excellency of them, I don't doubt but to give the Letter of these Stories a Toss out of the Creed of a considerate and wise Man; at least shew their Insufficiency for the Purpose for which they have been hitherto apply'd. And if I should afterwards, by the Leave and Patience of the *Bishop* of *London*, give my Objection against *Christ*'s Resurrection a Review, and some more Force, then what will become of the Argument of *Christ*'s Power, Authority, and *Messiahship* from his Miracles?

But, besides *Jesus*'s Miracles, I am, as Opportunity serves, to take into Consideration some of the Historical Parts of his Life; and shew them to be no less senseless, absurd and ridiculous than his Miracles.

And

And why may I not ſometimes treat on the Parables of *Jeſus*, and ſhow what nonſenſical and abſurd Things they are, according to the Expoſitions of our moſt famous Commentators of theſe laſt Ages. *Jeſus* was certainly the abſolute, and moſt conſummate Perfection of a *Cabaliſt*, *Myſtiſt*, a *Paraboliſt* and *Enigmatiſt*; but according to modern Commentaries and Paraphraſes, he was the mereſt Ideot and Blockhead that ever open'd his Mouth, in that ſort of Learning, to the Inſtruction of Mankind. And I am oblig'd a little to ſpeak to the Abſurdities of *Chriſt*'s Doctrine and Parables, becauſe one Article of the Proſecution againſt me was for ſaying, *that any of the Philoſophers of the Gentiles*, or *any rational Man* (meaning according to modern Expoſitions) *would make a better Teacher, than Jeſus was.*

What a great deal of Work have I upon my Hands, which, if God ſpare my Life and Health, I intend to go on with: If what I have already done in it be not acceptable to the *Clergy*, their Way to prevent the Proſecution of this great Undertaking, is to battle me upon what's paſt. Who knows but they may write, if they would try their Strength, ſo acutely in Defence of the Letter of *Jeſus*'s Miracles already diſcuſs'd, as may effectu-

ally ſtop my Mouth, and prevent my giving them any more Trouble of this Kind? And I ſuppoſe I have now gotten an Adverſary in the *Biſhop* of St. *David's*, who has already diſcharg'd one Fool's Bolt at me.

There has nothing been a more common Subject of Declamation among the the *Clergy* than the *Reaſonableneſs* of Chriſtianity, which muſt be underſtood of the Hiſtory of *Chriſt's* Life and Doctrine, or the Application of the Word *Reaſonableneſs* to the Chriſtian Religion is impertinent. But if I proceed, as I have begun in this Work, I ſhall ſhew Chriſtianity, as it is underſtood, to be the moſt unreaſonable and abſurd Story, that ever was told; and our modern Syſtems of Theology groundleſs and ſenſleſs in almoſt every Part of them. *Mahometaniſm*, without Offence be it ſpoken, is a more *reaſonable* Religion than the Chriſtian, upon modern *Schemes* and *Syſtems*.

If what I here ſay is offenſive to our *Divines*, the *Preſs* is open for them as well as for myſelf, and they may, if they can, ſhew their Reſentment of it. Thanks unto God and our moſt excellent Civil Government for ſuch a Liberty of the *Preſs*: A Liberty that will lead and conduct us to the Fountain of Wiſdom and Philoſophy, which Reſtraint is a down-right Enemy

nemy to. And that this Bleſſing of Liberty may be continued, for all *Biſhop Smalbrook* and Dr. *Rogers's Hobbiſm*, is, I dare ſay, the Deſire of the curious, inquiſitive, and philoſophical Part of Mankind. If this Liberty ſhould be taken away, what a notable Figure will our *Divines* make from the *Preſs* and *Pulpit*, declaming on the Reaſonableneſs, Excellency and Perfection of the Chriſtian Religion, without an Adverſary; and telling their Congregations, that all, their bittereſt and acuteſt Enemies can object, is clearly anſwered!

The *Preſs*, of late Years, has been productive of ſo many cogent and perſuaſive Arguments for Liberty of debate, and the Advocates for this Liberty, in the Judgment of the impartial and conſiderate, have ſo far gotten the better of their Adverſaries, that I wonder any one can appear in behalf of Perſecution. If I was a *Biſhop* or *Doctor* in *Divinity*, I ſhoud think it a Diſgrace to my Station and Education to ask the Aſſiſtance of the Civil Authority to protect my Religion: I ſhould judge my ſelf unworthy of the Wages and Emoluments I enjoy'd, for the Preaching and Propagation of the Goſpel, if I was unable to give an Anſwer to any one, that ask'd a Reaſon of my Faith: Or if I was ſo Shallow-pated, as to

think Hereſie and Infidelity puniſhable by the Civil Magiſtrate, I ſhould think myſelf as much oblig'd to confute by *Reaſon*, as he is to puniſh by the *Sword*. If the *Biſhop* of *London* had taken this Courſe with me; if he had publiſh'd a Refutation of my ſuppoſed Errors, as well as endeavour'd at a Proſecution of me for them, I had forgiven him the Wrongs and Injuries done me, and made no repeated Demands of Satisfaction for them.

Chriſtianity is, as I believe, founded on a Rock of Wiſdom; and what's more, has an omnipotent and omniſcient God on its Side, who can incline the Hearts of Men to believe, and open the Eyes of their Underſtanding to diſcern the Truth of it; conſequently there can be no Danger in the Attempts of our Adverſaries, whether *Jews*, *Turks* or Domeſtick *Infidels*, againſt it. But Perſecution implys Weakneſs and Impotency in God to defend his own Cauſe; or his Prieſts would not move for the Help of the Arm of Fleſh in Vindication of it. And if, at this Time of Day, after ſo many Treatiſes of *Infidels*, and ſome of them as yet unanſwered, againſt our Religion, this good Cauſe ſhould be taken out of the Hands of God, and committed to the Care of the Civil

Civil Magiſtrate; if inſtead of Reaſon, the Clergy ſhould have Recourſe to Force, what will By-ſtanders, and even Well-wiſhers to Chriſtianity ſay? Nothing leſs than that *Infidels* had gotten the better of *Chriſt*'s Miniſters, and beaten them at their own Weapons of Reaſon and Argument.

The two great Pleaders for Perſecution, to the Diſgrace of themſelves and Diſhonour of our Religion, that have lately aroſe are Dr. *Rogers* and the *Biſhop* of St. *David*'s. Dr. *Rogers*'s chief Reaſon againſt Liberty of Debate, is becauſe, as he ſays, it is pernicious to the Peace and Welfare of the Community, by unſettling the Minds of the People about the Religion eſtabliſhed: But here's no Conſequence, unleſs it could be proved, that ſuch as the great Mr. *Grounds* and Mr. *Scheme*, have it in their Hearts to raiſe Mobbs upon the Government, and to beat out the Brains of the *Clergy*. All the Harm, or rather Good, they aim at, is to exerciſe the Wits of the *Clergy* with their Doubts and Objections; and if the Paſſions of our *Eccleſiaſticks* are not raiſed upon it, to the doing of Violence to theſe *Gentlemen*, the Peace of the Publick will never be diſturb'd. As to myſelf, tho' I have a vaſt and numerous Party on my

my Side, no leſs than all the Fathers and primitive Chriſtians for ſome Ages; yet as we were peaceable and quiet Subjects of old, and paſſively obedient to the *Emperors* of *Rome*; ſo we will continue to the Civil Authority of this Nation. We only take the Liberty to awaken the Clergy out of a Lethargy of Dulneſs and Ignorance; and hope the Civil Magiſtrate will conſider the Goodneſs and Charity of our Intentions, and guard us againſt their Inſults for it.

The *Biſhop* of St. *David*'s (61) ſays, "It is abſurd to aſſert, that the Liberties "of any Nation will allow, with Impu- "nity, a Set of diſtinguiſh'd Infidels to "inſult and treat with the greateſt Con- "tempt and Scorn the moſt ſacred and "important Truths, that are openly pro- "feſſed, by the whole Body of the Peo- "ple, of whatever Denomination." By a Set of Infidels, I ſuppoſe, he means me and the Fathers: And by *treating with Contempt and Scorn the moſt ſacred and important Truths*, he means, our burleſquing, bantering and ridiculing the *Clergy* for their Miniſtry of the Letter: And for *this* he would, I conceive, have incenſed the *Societies* for Reformation of Manners to a Proſecution of me. And if they had not

(61) Sermon before the Society for Reformation, &c. p. 12.

been

been wiſer, and more merciful than their Preacher, I muſt have gone to Pot. But why ſhould the *Biſhop* diſlike this way of Writing? Don't he know, that the Fathers of the Church uſed to jeſt and ſcoff at the *Gentiles* and their Prieſts for their fooliſh Superſtitions? Don't he know, that our *Reformers* banter'd and ridicul'd Popery out of Doors, and almoſt within the Memory of Man, it was reckon'd but a dull Sermon, that was not well humm'd for its Puns and Jeſts on the Papiſts? why then ſhould the *Biſhop* be againſt that way of writing, which was of good Uſe to the *Reformers*, and firſt *Chriſtians*? The grand Subject for *Burleſque* and *Banter*, in my Opinion, is *Infidelity*; and that *Biſhop*, who can't break two Jeſts upon *Infidels* for their one upon Chriſtianity, has but a ſmall Share of Wit. The Chriſtian Religion according to the *Biſhop*, will abide the Teſt of calm and ſedate Reaſoning againſt it, but can't bear a Jeſt; O ſtrange!

But to leave theſe two Contenders for Perſecution to the Chaſtiſement of acuter Pens. What I have here pleaded for Liberty is not through any Fears of Danger to myſelf, but for the Love of Truth and Advancement of Chriſtianity, which, without it, can't be defended, propagated and

ſincerely

ſincerely embraced. And therefore hope, that the Controverſy before us, between *Infidels* and *Apoſtates* will be continued by the Indulgence of the Government, till Truth ariſes and ſhines bright to the Diſſipation of the Miſts of Error and Ignorance; like the Light of the Sun to the Diſperſion of the Darkneſs of the Night. I will by God's Leave, go on to bear my part in the Controverſy; And, if it was not more againſt the Intereſts than Reaſon of the *Clergy* to believe me, would again ſolemnly declare that what I do in it is with a View to the Honour of *Jeſus*, our ſpiritual *Meſſiah*, to whom be Glory for ever. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

A FOURTH

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR,

In VIEW of the Present Controversy between INFIDELS and APOSTATES.

Canes qui oblatrant contra Inquisitionem Veritatis. Clem. Alex.

The Second Edition.

By THOMAS WOOLSTON, sometime Fellow of *Sidney-College* in *Cambridge*.

LONDON:

Printed for the Author, and Sold by him next door to the *Star*, in *Aldermanbury*, and by the Booksellers of *London*, and *Westminster*, 1728.

[Price One Shilling.]

TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God

FRANCIS,

Lord Bishop of St. Asaph.

My Lord,

If the Convocation *had been sitting, I would have made this* Dedication *to them, and humbly implored of them, what for their Love to the Fathers, they would readily have granted, a Recommendation of these my* Discourses *on* Miracles *to the* Clergy: *But being unhappily disappointed of a Session of that* Reverend *and* Learned

Body, for whose wise Debates and orthodox Votes I have such a Veneration, as is not to be express'd in a few Words, I presently turn'd my Thoughts on your Lordship, *to whom a* Dedication *is due, because of your Respect, often declared, for the Authority of the Fathers, which induces me to think, you now approve of the Use I have made of them.*

But what I am here to applaud your Lordship *for, is, your* Discourse *call'd* Difficulties and Discouragements, *&c. That admirable Satire against modern Orthodoxy and Persecution! How was I tickled in the Perusal of it! It is plainly the Sense of your Soul, or you had set your Name to it: And if the Temptation of Praise for it, had not been too great to be resisted, I could have wish'd you had always conceal'd your self; and then you had not written against the Grain, an awkward Piece on* Church Power, *like a Retractation, to reingratiate your self with some Ecclesiastical* Noodles, *whom you no more, than I, need to care for.*

I have sometimes wondered, My Lord, *where and when the Great Mr.* Grounds *imbibed his notable Notions about Religion and Liberty; for he suck'd them not in with his Mothers Milk, who, I suppose, train'd him up in the Belief of Christianity: But when I consider'd, that he was once the* Pupil *of Mr.* Hare *at* Cambridge, *my wonder ceas'd. Under your* Lordship's *Tuition, it seems he laid the Foundation of his distinguish'd Learning and Opinions! His Pupillage will be your immortal Honour! I wonder, none of the Writers against him have as yet celebrated your Praise for it! How does he imitate and resemble his* Tutor *in Principles! I can't say, he surpasses you, since there is such a Freedom of Thought and Expression in your* Difficulties, *&c. so strongly savouring of Infid--ty, that he has not as yet equall'd.*

Upon your Lordship's *Advancement to a Bishoprick,* Difficultys and Discouragements *not withstanding, I wish'd, without prescribing to the Wis-*

dom

dom of the Government in the choice of a learned Prelate, that the great Mr. Grounds, *for the good of the Church too, might be ſoon conſecrated: And I ſhould not have deſpair'd of it, but that he is a Gentleman of real Probity and Conſcience, and might poſſibly boggle at Subſcriptions, unleſs you and Biſhop* Hoadly *could help him to ſome of your* Reſerves *and* Diſtinctions, *wherewith you muſt be both well Stock'd, to overcome that* Difficulty. *And why ſhould not* Dean Swift *for his Writings, as well as ſome others, be made a Biſhop? I ſhould like to ſee him one; if the* then *Right Reverend Biſhop* Grounds *would not think him, for his* Tale of a Tub, *too looſe in the Faith, for his Company.*

Don't imagine, My Lord, *that I am forming of Schemes for my ſelf to be a Biſhop. Tho theſe my* Diſcourſes *on* Miracles *are of very great Merit, as well as your Lordſhip's* Difficulties, *&c. yet you may be aſſured, I have no ſuch View, when I tell you, that the Honour,*

Honour, the Fathers have exalted me to, of a Moderator *in this Controversy, sets me above all Ecclesiastical Preferment excepting the* Arch-Bishoprick *of* Canterbury, *which I'm afraid will we void, before the King is appriſed of my ſingular Worth and Qualifications for it.*

But howewer, if ſuch excellent Prelates, *as* Grounds, Hoadly, Swift, Hare *and* my ſelf *were at the Head of Eccleſiaſtical Affairs, what would we do? What ſhould we not do? What would not this free-thinking Age expect from us? Nothing leſs, than that, according to our Principles, we ſhould endeavour to ſet Mankind at perfect Liberty, and to lay open the dirty Fences of the Church, call'd Subſcriptions, which are not only the Stain of a good Conſcience, but the* Diſcouragements, *your* Lordſhip *hints at, in the Study of the Scriptures: And if we made a Puſh for an Act of P——t to turn the* Clergy *to Graſs, after King* Henry VIIIth's *Monks and Fryars; where would*

would be the Harm of it? Nay, the Advantage to the Publick, as well as to Religion, would be great, if their Revenues were apply'd to the Payment of National Debts; with a Reserve to our selves (remember, My Lord) *of large Emoluments out of them, according to our great Merits; otherwise worldly-wise Men will repute us impolitick Fools, which you and Bishop* Hoadly, *I humbly presume, will never endure the Reproach of.*

So, hoping your Lordship will accept of this Dedication to your Praise, in as much Sincerity as it is written, I subscribe myself,

My LORD,

London, *May* 14. 1728.

The Admirer of your Difficultys and Discouragements,

Tho. Woolston.

A FOURTH

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR, &c.

NOW for a *fourth* Diſcourſe on *Jeſus*'s Miracles, which, as before, I begin with a Repitition of the three general Heads, at firſt propoſed to be treated on; and they are,

I. To ſhow, that the Miracles of healing all manner of bodily Diſeaſes, which

Jesus was famed for, are none of the proper Miracles of the *Messiah*; neither are they so much as a good Proof of his divine Authority to found a Religion.

II. To prove that the literal History of many of the Miracles of *Jesus*, as recorded by the *Evangelists*, does imply Absurdities, Improbabilities and Incredibilities; consequently they, either in the whole or in part, were never wrought, as it is commonly believed now-a-days, but are only related as prophetical and parabolical Narratives, of what would be mysteriously, and more wonderfully done by him.

III. To consider what *Jesus* means, when he appeals to his Miracles, as to a Testimony and Witness of his divine Power; and to show that he could not properly and ultimately refer to those he then wrought in the *Flesh*, but to the mystical ones, he would do in the *Spirit*; of which those wrought in the Flesh are but mere Types and Shadows.

I am upon the second of these Heads, and according to it, have, in my *former Discourses*, taken into examination *eight* of the Miracles of *Jesus*, *viz.* those:

1. Of

1. Of his driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple.

2. Of his exorciſing the *Devils* out of the Mad-men, and ſending them into the Herd of Swine.

3. Of his Transfiguration on the Mount.

4. Of his healing a Woman, that had an Iſſue of Blood, twelve Years.

5. Of his curing a Woman, that had a Spirit of Infirmity, eighteen Years.

6. Of his telling the *Samaritan* Woman, her fortune of having had five Husbands, and being then an Adultereſs with another Man.

7. Of his curſing the Figtree for not bearing Fruit out of ſeaſon. And,

8. Of his healing a Man of an Infirmity at the Pool of *Bethesda*.

Whether it be not manifeſt, that the Literal and Evangelical Story of theſe Miracles, from what I have argu'd and reaſon'd upon them, does not conſiſt of Abſurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities, according to the Propoſition before us, let my Readers judge; and ſo I come to the Conſideration of

9. A ninth Miracle of *Jeſus*, *viz.* that (1) of his giving ſight to a Man who was

(1) John ix.

born blind, by the means of Eye-salve, made of Dirt and Spittle.

Blindness, as far as one may guess by the Evangelical History, was the Distemper that *Jesus* frequently exercis'd his Power on: And there is no doubt to be made, but he heal'd many of one Weakness, Defect and Imperfection, or other in their Eyes; but whether he wrought any Miracle upon any, he is supposed to have cured, is uncertain. There are, as it's notorious, many kinds of Blindness, that are incurable by Art or Nature; and there are other kinds of it, that Nature and Art will relieve a Man in. But whether *Jesus* used his healing Power against the former, as well as the latter sort of Blindness, is more than can be affirm'd, or at least proved by our *Divines*. And unless we knew of a certainty, that the sore or blind Eyes, *Jesus* cured, were absolutely out of the reach of Art and Nature; *Infidels* will imagine, and suggest, that he was only Master of a good Ointment for sore Eyes, and being successful in the use of it, ignorant People would needs think, he wrought Miracles.

The World is often bless'd with excellent *Oculists*, who thro' Study and Practice have attain'd to wonderful Skill in Eye-Maladies, which tho they are of va-

rious

rious ſorts, yet, by Cuſtom of Speech, all paſs under the general Name of *Blindneſs*. And ſometimes we hear of famous *Chance-Doctors*, like *Jeſus*, who by a Gift of God, Nature, or Fortune, without any Skill in the Structure of the Eyes, have been very ſucceſsful in the Cure of one Diſtemper or other incident to them: Such was Sir *William Read*, who, tho no Scholar, nor of acquir'd Abilities in *Phyſick* and *Surgery*, yet cured his Thouſands of ſore or blind Eyes; and many of them too to the ſurpriſe and aſtoniſhment of profeſs'd *Surgeons* and *Phyſicians*. Whether He, or *Jeſus*, cured the greater number of Blindneſs may be queſtion'd. To pleaſe our *Divines*, it ſhall be granted that *Jeſus* cured the greater Numbers; but that he cured worſe or more difficult Diſtempers in the Eyes, can't be proved. Sir *William* indeed met with many Caſes of blind and ſore Eyes, that were out of the reach of his Power; and ſo did *Jeſus* too, or he had never let great Multitudes of the blind, and otherwiſe diſtemper'd People, go unheal'd by him. Our *Divines* will here ſay, that it was never want of Power in *Jeſus*, but want of Faith in the diſeaſed, if he did not heal them; but in other *Surgeons* and *Phyſicians*, it is confeſſedly their own Inſufficiency: To which I have only this

Anſwer,

Anſwer, that our *Phyſicians* and *Surgeons* are to be commended for their Ingenuity, to impute it to their own Defect of Power, and not to lay the Blame upon their Patients, when they can't cure them: And it is lucky for us Chriſtians, that we have *this Salvo* for the Credit of *Jeſus*'s miraculouſly healing Power, that it was not fit, he ſhould exert it againſt Unbelief; otherwiſe, reaſonably ſpeaking, He, with Sir *William Read*, *Greatrex*, *Veſpaſian*, our former *Kings* of *England*, and *Seventh-Sons*, muſt have paſs'd but for a *Chance-Doctor*.

But to come to the particular Conſideration of the Miracle before us. *Jeſus* reſtored, it ſeems, a blind Man to his Eye-ſight, by the uſe of a peculiar Ointment, and waſhing of his Eyes, as directed, in the Pool of *Siloam*. Where lies the Miracle? I can't ſee it; but hope our *Divines* will take their opportunity to point it out to me. Our *Surgeons* with their Ointments and Waſhings can cure ſore and blind Eyes of one ſort or other; and *Jeſus* did no more here; and yet he muſt be reckon'd a Worker of Miracles; and they, but artificial Operators: where's the Senſe and Reaſon of this difference between them? If Mr. *Moor*, the *Apothecary*, for the notable Cures he performs, by the means

means of his Medicines, ſhould write himſelf, and be accounted by his Admirers, a *Miracle-worker*; he and they would be but laugh'd at for it: And yet *Jeſus* for his curing the ſore Eyes of a poor Man with an Ointment, muſt be had in veneration for a divine and miraculous Operator, as much as if by the breath of his Mouth, he had removed an huge Mountain!

A Miracle, if I miſtake not the Notion of our *Divines* about it, is a ſupernatural Event, or a Work out of the Power of Nature or Art to effect. And when it is ſpoken of the Cure of a Diſeaſe, as of Blindneſs or Lameneſs, it ought to be ſo repreſented, as that skilful and experienced *Surgeons* and *Phyſicians*, who can do ſtrange and ſurprizing Cures by Art, may give it upon their Judgment, that no Skill of Man could reach that Operation; but that it ought to paſs for the Work of a divine and almighty Hand and Power: But there is no ſuch care taken in the Deſcription of any of the Diſeaſes, which *Jeſus* cured; much leſs of this before us; againſt the miraculouſneſs of which, conſequently, there are theſe two Exceptions to be made:

Firſt, That we know nothing of the Nature of this poor Man's Blindneſs; nor what

what was the defect of his Eyes; nor whether it was curable by Art or not: Without which Knowledge, it is impossible and unreasonable to assert, that there was a Miracle wrought in the Cure of him. If his blindness or weakness of Eye-sight was curable by human means, and Jesus did use those means, there's an end of the Miracle. If the *Evangelist* had given us an accurate Description of the Condition of this Man's Eyes before Cure, we could have judg'd better: But this is their constant neglect in all the Distempers *Jesus* heal'd, and is enough to induce us to doubt of his miraculous Power. There are, as I have said, some sorts of sore or blind Eyes curable by Art, as Experience does testify; and there are others incurable, as *Physicians* and *Patients* do lament. Of which sort this Man's was, we know not. The worst that we know of his Case, is, that he was blind from his Birth, or Infancy, which might be; and yet Time, Nature and Art, may give relief to him. As a Man advances in Years, the diseases of Childhood and Youth wear off. What we call the *King's-Evil*, or an Inflamation in the Eyes, in time will abate of its Malignity. Nature will not only by degrees work the Cure it-self, but the seasonable help of a good *Oculist* will soon expedite

it,

it, tho in time of Infancy he could be of no uſe. And who knows but this might be the Caſe of this blind Man, whoſe Cure *Jeſus* by his Art did only haſten and help forward. However, there are Grounds enough to ſuſpect, that it was not divine Power which heal'd this Man, or *Jeſus* had never prepared and order'd an *Ointment* and *Waſh* for him.

Should our *Divines* ſuppoſe or deſcribe, for the *Evangeliſt*, a ſtate of Blindneſs in this Man, incurable by Art; that would be begging the Queſtion, which no Unbeliever will grant. But to pleaſe them, I will yield, without Enquiry into the Nature of this Man's Blindneſs, that, if *Jeſus* had uſed no Medicines; if with only a word of his Mouth he had cured the Man, and he had inſtantaneouſly recover'd, as the Word was ſpoken; here would have been a real and great Miracle, let the Blindneſs or Imperfection of the Man's Sight before, be of what kind or degree ſoever. But *Jeſus*'s uſe of Waſhings and Ointments abſolutely ſpoils and deſtroys the Credit of the Miracle, and we ought by no means to aſcribe *that* to the immediate Hand and Power of God,, which *Medicines* and *Balſans* are apply'd to the Effect of. And this brings me to the

Second Exception againſt the miraculouſneſs of the Cure of this blind Man, which is, that *Jeſus* uſed human means, for the Cure of him; which means, whether they were at all proper and effectual in themſelves, do affect the Credit of the Miracle, and give occaſion of ſuſpicion, that it was Art and not divine Power that heal'd him, or *Jeſus*, for his Honour, had never had recourſe to the uſe of them. And what were thoſe Means, or that Medicine, which *Jeſus* made uſe of? Why, " He ſpat upon the " Ground, and made a Balſam of Dirt " and Spittle, and anointed the poor " Man's Eyes with it, and he recover'd." A ſtrange and odd ſort of an Ointment, that I believe was never uſed before, nor ſince, for ſore and blind Eyes! I am not Student enough in *Phyſick* and *Surgery* to account for the natural and rational uſe of this Balſam; but wiſh that skilful Profeſſors of thoſe Sciences would help me out at this difficulty. If they could rationally account for the uſe of this Eye-ſalve, tho it was by ſuppoſing, that Jeſus imperceptibly had in his Mouth a proper unctuous and Balſamick Subſtance, which he diſſolv'd into Spittle, they would do great ſervice to a certain Cauſe; and I wonder none of them whether

whether well or ill affected to Religion, have as yet bent their Thoughts to it.

In the Practice of *Phyſick* and *Surgery*, there are ſometimes very odd and unaccountable Medicaments made uſe of; and now-and-then very whimſical and ſeemingly ridiculous ones, by old Women, to good Purpoſe: But none of them are to be compared to *Jeſus*'s Balſam for ſore Eyes. I have heard of a merry *Mountebank* of Diſtinction, whoſe catholick Medicine was *Haſty-Pudding*, which indeed is a notable Remedy againſt the *Eſuriency* of the Stomach, that the Poor often labour under. But *Jeſus*'s Eye-Salve, for Abſurdity, whim, and incongruity, was never equall'd, either in jeſt or in earneſt, by any *Quack-Doctor*. Whether *Infidels* think of this Ointment of the Holy *Jeſus* with a ſmile; or reflect on it with diſdain, I can't gueſs. As to myſelf, I ſhould think with St. *Chryſoſtom* (2), that this Eye-Salve of *Jeſus* would ſooner put a Man's Eyes out, than reſtore a blind one to his Sight. And I believe that our *Divines*, for the Credit of the Miracle, and our *Surgeons*, for the Honour of their Science, will

(2) Quid Lutum illinere oportet? hoc potius cæcum reddere, quis unquam hoc pacto curatus eſt? *In Loc. Johan.*

agree, that it could not be naturally operative and effective of the Cure of the blind Man.

What then was the Reaſon of *Jeſus*'s uſing this ſtrange Eye-Salve, when, for the ſake of the Miracle, and for the honour of his own Power, he ſhould have cured the Man with a word ſpeaking? This is a Queſtion and Objection in St. *Cyril* (3) againſt Miniſters of the Letter, who are obliged to give an Anſwer to it, that will conſiſt with the Wiſdom and Power of *Jeſus*, otherwiſe they muſt give up the Miracle, or make him a vain inſignificant and trifling Agent. St. *Cyril*, of whoſe Mind I am, ſays (4) that the Reaſon of the uſe of this Balſam, made of Dirt and Spittle, is to be fetch'd from the Myſtery. But, in as much as our *Divines* will never agree to that, which would be of ill Conſequence to their Miniſtry, they muſt give a good Reaſon of their own, which I deſpair of ſeeing, that will comport with the Letter.

(3) Quam ob cauſam dicet aliquis, cum omnia ſolo Verbo præſtare poſſit, nulloque negotio, Lutum quidem ſputo macerat? *In Loc. Joban.*

(4) Sed Rationem quandam myſticam habet Vis Rei ipſius de ſputo. *Ibid.*

St.

St. *Irenæus* too, says (5), that the *Clay and Spittle* was of no service to the Cure of the blind Man; and yet *Jesus* did not use it *in vain*. Is not this an Inconsistency? How will our *Divines* adjust it? With *Irenæus*, I am sure they'll not mystically solve the Difficulty; therefore if they dont provide another Solution of it to satisfaction, either their Ministry of the Letter, or the Reputation of *Jesus*, and this Miracle, must suffer for it.

I am puzzled to think, how our *Divines* will extricate themselves out of this Strait, and account for the use of this Eye-Salve, without any Diminution of the Miracle. Surely, they will not say that *Jesus* used this senseless and insignificant Ointment to put a *Slur* upon the Practice of *Physick* and *Surgery*, as if other Medicines were of no more avail than his *Dirt* and *Spittle*. They have more wit than to say so; least it incense a noble and most useful Profession, not so much against themselves, as against *Jesus*, and provoke them to a

(5) Ei autem qui cæcus fuerat a Nativitate, jam non per sermonem sed per operationem præstitit visum; non vanè, neque prout evenit, hoc faciens, sed ut ostenderet manum Dei, eam quæ ab initio plasmavit Hominem, &c. Contra Hæres. L. v. c. 15.

nicer

nicer and ſtricter Enquiry than I can make into his Miracles, the Diſeaſes he cured, and his manner of Operation; and to infer from thence, that he could be no miraculous Healer of Diſeaſes who uſed Medicines; nor his *Evangeliſts* orthodox at Theology, who were ſo inexpert at Anatomy and the Deſcription of bodily Diſtempers. This might be of bad Conſequence to Religion: And yet I wonder that none of them, who may be ſuppoſed a little diſaffected to Chriſtianity, have taken the Hint from this pretended Miracle before us, and ſome others, to endeavour at a Proof of *Jeſus*'s being little better than a *Quack-Doctor*.

If I was, what I am not, an *Infidel*, I ſhould think, from the Letter of this Story, that *Jeſus* was a *juggling Impoſtor*, who would paſs for a miraculous Healer of Diſeaſes, tho he uſed underhand proper Medicines. The *Clay and the Spittle* he made an open ſhew of, as what, to Admiration, he would cure the blind Man with; but in reſerve he had a more ſanative Balſam, that he ſubtilly ſlipt in the room of the Clay, and repeatedly to good purpoſe anointed the Man's Eyes with it. But as the Authority of the Fathers, and their myſtical Interpretation of this Story, is alone my ſafe-

ſafe-guard againſt ſuch an ill opinion of *Jeſus*; ſo I would now gladly know upon what Bottom the Faith of our *Divines* can ſtand, as to this Miracle, and *Jeſus*'s divine Power in it.

I have peruſed ſome of our *Commentators* on the Place, and don't perceive that they heſitate at this ſtrange Eye-Salve; nor make any Queſtions about the pertinent or impertinent Uſe of it. Whether it is, that they ſleep over the Story, or are aware of greater Difficultys in it, than can be eaſily ſurmounted, and therefore dare not touch on't, I know not. But now that we enjoy Liberty of Debate, which will make us Philoſophers, and I have taken the Freedom to make a ſtricter Scrutiny than ordinary into *Jeſus*'s Miracles, and to conſider what Abſurditys, their Storys, and *this* in particular, are clog'd with; it is incumbent on our *Divines* to anſwer ſolidly theſe Queſtions, *viz.* What was the Reaſon of *Jeſus*'s Uſe of this Eye-Salve made of Clay and Spittle? Whether, if it was of ſervice to the Cure of the blind Man, it does not deſtroy the Miracle? And if it had no Effect in the Cure of him, whether *Jeſus* was not a *vain* and *trifling* Operator, making uſe of inſignificant and impertinent Medicines to the Diminution of

of his divine Power? Theſe Queſtions are not ludicrous, but *calm and ſedate Reaſoning*, which *Biſhop Smalbroke* (6) does not diſapprove of. Therefore a grave, rational, and ſubſtantial Anſwer is expected to them, ſuch as will be a Vindication of the Wiſdom and Power of *Jeſus*, without any Diminution of the Miracle.

Should our *Divines* ſay, that this Matter was an Act of unſearchable Wiſdom, and muſt be left to the Will of our Saviour, and not curiouſly pry'd into, any more than ſome other Diſpenſations of Providence, that are paſt finding out: This Anſwer, which I believe to be the beſt, that can be given, will not do here. The Miracles of *Jeſus* are, as our *Divines* own, Appeals to our Reaſon and Senſes for his Authority; and by our Reaſon and Senſes they are to be try'd, condemn'd or approved of. If they will not abide the teſt of Reaſon and Senſe, they are to be rejected, and *Jeſus*'s Authority along with them. Therefore a more cloſe, pertinent and ſerious Anſwer is to be given to the ſaid Queſtions; which as I believe to

(6) *See his Sermon before the Societys for Reformation*, p. 12.

be

be impoſſible, conſiſtently with the Letter; ſo our *Divines* muſt of neceſſity go along with me to the Fathers for a myſtical and allegorical Interpretation of the Story of this Eye-Salve; or the Miracle will fall to the Ground, and *Jeſus*'s divine Power be in great danger with it.

St. *Cyril*, (who is one of *Biſhop Smalbroke*'s Greek Commentators, that ſhould ſtrictly adhere to the Letter) ſignifies, as I before obſerv'd, that *Jeſus*'s Uſe of this Clay and Spittle would be an Abſurdity, if it was not to be accounted for, from the Myſtery.

Euſebius Gallicanus, treating on this Miracle, ſays (7); " that our Saviour " apparently manifeſts that his Miracles " are of a ſpiritual and myſtical Signifi- " cation, becauſe in the Work of them, " he does ſomewhat or other, that lite- " rally has no Senſe nor Reaſon in it. " As for Inſtance, in the Cure of this " blind Man, what occaſion was there

(7) Ipſe ſalvator noſter apertiſſime oſtendit. quod ejus Miracula aliquid ſignificent; dum ea faciendo aliquid agit, quod Ratione carere videatur. Niſi enim aliquid ſignificaret, quid neceſſarium fuit, in hujus cæci Illuminatione, ut Lutum faceret, quo oculos ejus liniret, cui ſolum dicere ſufficiens erat. Quæramus igitur ſignificationem, & videamus quid cæcus iſte ſignificet. *In Homil. quarta poſt quartam Dominicam.*

" for *Clay and Spittle* to anoint his Eyes,
" if it was not of a myſtical meaning,
" when with a Word of his Mouth,
" *Jeſus* could have cured him? Let us
" then ſet aſide the Letter of the Story,
" and ſearch for the Myſtery, and con-
" ſider who is meant by this blind
" Man, *&c.*"

Origen too, upon occaſion of this Miracle, and its Abſurdity according to the Letter, ſays (8); " that whatever
" *Jeſus* did in the Fleſh was but Type
" and Figure of what he would do in
" Spirit, as is apparent from the Miracle
" of his curing a blind Man, which no-
" body knows why it was ſo done, if
" it be not to be underſtood of a myſ-
" tical Ointment to open the Eyes of the
" blind in Underſtanding."

And who then is this blind Man myſtically? St. *Auguſtin* (9), St. *Jerome* (10),

(8) Similitudo erat & Typus futurorum unumquodque quod fiebat in Corpore. Veluti neſcio quis à Nativitate cæcus Viſum recuperavit. Vere autem cæcus iſte erat à Nativitate Gentilium Populus, cui Salvator reddidit Viſum, Saliva ſua ungens oculos ejus & mittens ad *Siloam*, quod interpretatur miſſus, mittebat quippe illos quos ſpiritu unxit ad Apoſtolos. *In Iſai.* c. vi.

(9) Genus humanum eſt iſte cæcus. *In Loc. Johan.*

(10) Cæcus humanum Genus ſignificatur. *In Com. Johan.*

Euſebius

Euſebius Gallicanus (11), St. *Theophilus* of *Antioch* (12), *Origen* (13), St. *Cyril* of *Alexandria* (14), and St. *Theophylact* (15), (Four of them, *Biſhop Smalbroke*'s Greek and literal Commentators!) ſay, this *blind Man* is a Type of Mankind of all Nations, who in the Perfection of Time ſignified by the Sabbath (16) in the Story, is to be cured of this Blindneſs in Underſtanding.

And what is Mankind's Blindneſs here ſignified? St. *Auguſtin* (17), St. *Cyril* (18) and St. *Thyophylact* (19), ſay, it is Ignorance, Error and Infidelity, or the want of the intellectual Sight and Knowledge of

(11) Cæcus iſte a Nativitate, Genus humanum eſſe videtur à primo homine.---Hæc enim cæcitas non Corporis ſed Animæ eſt. *In Loc. ſupra laudat.*

(12) Per cæcum naturaliter non videntem & illuminatum ſignificat Genus humanum. *In Loc. Johan.*

(13) Vere autem cæcus iſte erat à Nativitate Gentilium Populus. *In Iſai.* c. vi.

(14) Cæci hujus Curationem in figuram & typum vocationis Gentium accepimus. *In Loc. Johan.*

(15) Intellige hoc Miraculum ſpiritualiter. Nam cæcus quidem erat omnis homo à Nativitate, id eſt, ab Initio Mundi. *In Loc. Johan.*

(16) In Sabbato eſt figura ultimi Temporis. *St. Cyril in Loc. Johan.*

(17) Cæcitas eſt Infidelitas. *In Loc.*

(18) Cæcus qui deſtituitur divino Lumine. *De Adorat.* p. 414.

(19) Cæcus qui ſedet in tenebris omnis Ignorantiæ & non potuit videre Conditorem Mundi. *In Loc. Johan.*

God and his Providence. *Origen* (20), St. *John* of *Jeruſalem* (21), and St. *Theophylact* (22), (Still *Biſhop Smalbroke*'s literal and Greek Commentators!) tell us the Reaſon of this ſpiritual Blindneſs of Mankind, and that is, becauſe they adhere to the Letter of the Scriptures.

And how will *Jeſus*, or right *Reaſon* and *Truth*, which are his myſtical Names, cure Mankind of this his ſpiritual Blindneſs? By his myſtical *Spittle* temper'd with myſtical *Dirt*. And how ſhall we do to underſtand this myſtical Ointment, ſo as to make it a Proper Medicine for Mankind's ſpiritual Blindneſs? St. *Theophilus* of *Antioch* (23), has an allegorical Interpretation of this *Clay* and *Spittle* of our Lord; but as it is hard to apprehend his meaning, I ſhall not here inſiſt on it. *Origen* ſays (24), that the anointing of the blind Man's Eyes with

(20) Literam Legis ſequentes, in Errores, Superſtitiones & Infidelitatem incurrunt. *In Matt. Tract.* xxvi.

(21) Cæcus iſte eſt cæcus in Litera, & hoc ſtatu Sanari non poteſt. *In Marc.* c. viii.

(22) Cæci qui imperiti Scripturarum. *In Loc. Johan.*

(23) Lutum vero factum de Saliva oris Domini, ac poſitum ſuper oculos cæci, ſignificat hic, quod naturæ deerat, opere ſuo implere Figulum. *In Loc. Johan.*

(24) Saliva ſua ungens Oculos cæci & mittens ad *Siloam* quod interpretatur *Miſſus*, mittebat quippe illos, quos ſpiritu unxit, &c. *In Iſai. c.* vi.

Spittle,

Spittle, is to be underſtood of the Unction of the *Spirit* of Chriſt. But this does not give us rightly to underſtand the Metaphor and Figure. St. *John* of *Jeruſalem* ſays, that by the *Clay* and *Spittle* is meant (25) *perfect Doctrine*, which in Truth may open the Eyes of Mens Underſtanding: But what is *perfect Doctrine?* Why, to help the Fathers out here, without departing from their Opinions, by the *Spittle* of Jeſus muſt be underſtood the *Water* of the Spirit inſtill'd into the *Earth* of the Letter of the Scriptures, which temper'd together, does, in the Judgment of them all, make *perfect Doctrine* to the opening of the Eyes of our Underſtanding in the Knowledge of the Providence of God of all Ages; which Knowledge, Light, Sight, or Illumination, Mankind has hitherto wanted.

St. *Irenæus* (26), gives an excellent and myſtical Reaſon, by himſelf, for the uſe

(25) Saliva eſt perfecta Doctrina. *In Marc.* c. viii.

(26) Ei autem qui cæcus fuerat à Nativitate, jam non per ſermonem ſed per operationem præſtitit Viſum; non vanè neque prout evenit hoc faciens, ſed ut oſtenderet manum Dei, eam que ab Initio plaſmavit hominem. Quapropter expuit in Terram & fecit Lutum, & ſuperlinivit illud Oculis, oſtendens antiquam Plaſmationem, quemadmodum facta eſt, & manum Dei manifeſtans his qui intelligere poſſunt, per quam è Limo plaſmatus eſt homo. *Cont. Hæreſes. L.* v. *c.* 15.

of

of this Ointment of *Clay* and *Spittle*, to the Cure of this blind Man, which I ſhall not ſtay to illuſtrate, but only have cited it for the Meditation of the Learned and Curious.

The Story of the blind Man, as St. *John* has related it, is long, and would take up more time, than I have to ſpare at preſent, to go thro' all the Parts of it. What I have done at preſent is enough to awaken others to the Conſideration, not only of the Abſurdities of the Letter, but of the myſtical Interpretation of the reſt.

The Miracle, which conſiſted literally in the Cure of a blind Man by the uſe of an Ointment made of *Dirt* and *Spittle*, is abſurd, ſenſleſs and unaccountable; but in the Myſtery, there is Wiſdom and Reaſon. And the Cure of Mankind of the Blindneſs of his Underſtanding, by the *Spirit*'s being temper'd with the *Letter* of the Scriptures, which is the myſtical *Eye-Salve*, will not only be a moſt ſtupendous Miracle, but a Proof of *Jeſus*'s *Meſſiahſhip* beyond all contradiction, in as much as by ſuch an opening of the Eyes of our Underſtandings, which have been hitherto dark, we ſhall ſee, how he is the Accompliſhment of the Law and the Prophets. And ſo I paſs to a

10. Tenth

10. Tenth Miracle of *Jesus*, *viz.* (27) *That of his turning Water into Wine, at a Marriage in* Cana *of* Galilee. This is call'd the beginning of *Jesus*'s Miracles; but whether it is to be understood of the *First* of his whole Life, or of the *First* that he wrought in *Cana* of *Galilee*, is not agreed amongst *Divines*. I shall not enter into the Dispute, which as it is of no Consequence to my Cause in hand; so I shall pass it by, and not urge any Arguments for or against either side of it.

Tho I would not for the World be so impious and profane as to believe, what is contain'd and imply'd in the Letter of this Story; yet I am still too grave to handle it as ludicrously as I ought; and it is now against the grain, that I write so freely as I shall against it, being unwilling, not only to put the *Clergy* out of all Temper, but, to give *Scoffers* and *Infidels* so great an Advantake against their Ministry of the Letter. Some may wonder that I, who have gone so far in the ludicrous display of the gross Absurdities of some other Miracles, should boggle at this. But to be ingenuous, and speak the Truth sincerely,

(27) John ii.

I am

I am ſtill a Chriſtian (for all what the *Biſhop* of St. *David*'s, (28) *Archdeacon Stubbs*, and others would make of me) upon the Principles of the Fathers, and have a greater Veneration for the Perſon of the Holy *Jeſus*, than to be forward to make ſuch ſport with him, his Mother, and his Diſciples, as this Story affords Scope for. And if it was not for the neceſſity of turning the *Clergy*'s Heads to the Conſideration of Myſterys, this Miracle ſhould have been paſs'd by in ſilence.

There were ſome antiently, whom St. *Chryſoſtom* (29) writes of, whether *Jews*, *Gentiles*, or *Heretiсks*, I know not, who took great offence at the Story of this Wedding, accounting it, from what is related in St. *John*, as a riotous Feaſt, and that *Jeſus* and his Mother, and his Diſciples, not only bore a part in the Revellings, but were moſt to blame for them; or he ſhould not have countenanced them with his Preſence, much leſs promoted them, by the Change of a large quantity of Water into Wine for the uſe of a Company, who were already *drunk*

(28) *See his Speech in Convocation, printed in the* Poſt-Boy *of* March *the* 30*th.*

(29) Rurſus hoc in loco calumniantur nonnulli hunc ebrioſorum fuiſſe Conventum, *&c. In Loc. Johan.*

with

with it. But I, with St. *Chryſoſtom*, am inclined to believe, that, if *Jeſus* did grace this Wedding with his Preſence, there was no Exceſs encouraged, or ſo much as ſuffer'd at it. If he did accept of the Invitation of the Bridegroom, it was for an opportunity, not ſo much to turn *Water* into *Wine*, as to make a proper Diſcourſe to the People of conjugal Duties; and, as he was a ſearcher of the Hearts, ſecretly to admoniſh the Married of the Sin and Miſchief of Adultery; tho we read not of a ſeaſonable and good Word ſpoken at it.

And the Empreſs *Eudocia*, a nurſing Mother of the Church, has given us a Poetical, and I hope a fictitious Deſcription of this Wedding. She makes a ſumptuous and voluptuous Feaſt of it; and writes (30) of *Muſick* and *Dancing* in abundance, enough to make us think of ſuch Mirth and Paſtime here, as was unbecoming of a Company of Saints to be preſent at. Whether it was, that this

(30) Pueri aut Saltatores volutabantur, in his autem Tibiæ, Lyræque Vocem habebant. Mulieres autem Cantum accipientes, volvebantur per medias Quæcunque optimatum erant uxores atque filiæ. Illi vero ad Saltationem & deſiderabilem Cantum Converſi delectabantur, &c.

In *Homero-Centon.*

Empreſs, being only accuſtom'd to the Exceſſes of a Court, could form no meaner Conceptions of a Country Wedding; or whether ſhe had any extra-ſcriptural Authority for what ſhe writ, I know not: But I believe, that, if *Jeſus* was at all at a Marriage-Feaſt, the whole was conducted with Decency, Order, and Sobriety; and if he there wrought any Miracle, it was to manifeſt his Glory, to the Converſion of ſome, and Confirmation of the Faith of others.

And our *Tranſlators* of the *Eible* too have given occaſion to ſuſpect ſomewhat of Exceſs at this Wedding; or they need not have made the Waterpots to hold two or three Firkins apiece. If I had been the Tranſlator, they ſhould not have held above two or three *Pints* apiece, which Meaſure is as agreeable to the Original as *Firkin*; neither can I imagine, that *Jeſus*, if he did convert Water into Wine, would do it in ſo large a Meaſure, for fear of an intemperate abuſe of it, but only gave the Company a caſt of his miraculous Power, and a little taſte of his Love and Good-will to them.

Such are the Conceptions, that, to the Honour of *Jeſus*, I am willing to form of this *Wedding*; and wiſh that the

Letter

Letter of the Story did ſuggeſt no worſe Thoughts of it to us. I ſhould e ple s'd, if no *Infidel* really could, what I, but for the ſake of the Myſtery moſt unwillingly ſhould, write any ludicrous Deſcants on it. But if this Story had been related of *Apollonius Tyanæus*, as it is of our *Jeſus*, I would have ridicul'd and ſatiriz'd it to the utmoſt of my Power, and have render'd him and his Diſciples of all Nations, as contemptible as I could, for the Belief of it; and I don't doubt, but our Chriſtian *Prieſts* would have given me ample Praiſes and Commendations for ſo doing. It is ſaid of *Apollonius*, that for the Entertainment of his Friends, he commanded variety of nice Diſhes of Meat, together with Bowls of choiceſt Wine, all on a ſudden to deſcend upon his Table and range themſelves in good Order. Whether there was any Truth in this Miracle of *Apollonius*, is not the Queſtion; but Mr. *Chandler* (31) could ſee a Fault in it, (tho none in *Jeſus*'s Wine at this Wedding) as if it was done for the Pleaſure of luxurious Appetites, tho we read of no Intemperance at it, which can't be ſaid of the *Wedding-Feaſt* before us. Our

(31) *Vindication of the Chriſtian Religion.* p. 82.

Divines I ſuppoſe, no more than myſelf, believe any thing of the ſaid Miracle in *Apollonius*; but, if it was really wrought, I fancy, I could have lampoon'd him for it, and would have made it a diabolical Work, like that, as Fables go, of the Feaſtings of *Wizards* and *Witches*; and our *Divines* (paſſing by *Jeſus*'s *Wine* here) would readily, as they are Believers of the Storys of Witchcraft, have ſtruck in with me.

But ſetting aſide that miraculous Story of *Apollonius*, which has but *one* Voucher; the Caſe before us is *Jeſus*'s *turning Water into Wine* for the uſe of Men, who had before *well drank*. How ſhall I force Nature and Faith to ridicule this Story? How ſhall I lay aſide that profound Veneration for the Holy *Jeſus*, which Converſation with the Fathers, more than the Prejudice of Education has begotten in me, and ludicrouſly here treat him and his Miracle too, as is incumbent upon me, to make way for the Myſtery? In ſhort, I can't do it, in my own Name; but having met with a ſatirical Invective of a ſuppoſed Jewiſh *Rabbi* to this purpoſe, I here publiſh it, that our *Clergy*, as well as myſelf, may think of an Anſwer to it, and ſo prevent that Miſchief it may do by being handed

handed about among *Jews* and *Infidels* in Manuſcript. It is as follows;

" You Chriſtians pay Adoration to " *Jeſus*, whom you believe to be a di- " vine Author of Religion, ſent of God " for the Inſtruction, Reformation and " Salvation of Mankind; and what In- " duces you to this Belief of him, is, " (beſides ſome obſcure Prophecies, which " you can't agree upon, and which nei- " ther your ſelves, nor any body elſe " underſtands the Application of) the " Hiſtory of his Miracles: But I won- " der, you ſhould have a good opinion " of him for his Miracles, which, if he " wrought no better than what are re- " corded of him, by your *Evangeliſts*, " are if duly conſider'd, enough to a- " lienate your Hearts from him. I can't " ſpare time now to examine into all of " them, but according to the curſory " Obſervation I have made on them, there " is not one ſo well circumſtanced, as to " merit a conſiderate Man's belief, that " it was the Work of an omnipotent, " all-wiſe, juſt and good Agent. Some " of them are abſurd Tales, others foo- " liſh Facts, others unjuſt Actions, others " ludicrous Pranks, others jugling Tricks, " others magical Enchantments; and if

" many

" many of them had been better and
" greater Operations than they are, and
" of a more uſeful and ſtupendous na-
" ture than they ſeem to be; yet the
" firſt Miracle that he wrought, *viz.*
" that of his *turning Water into Wine*
" at an extravagant and voluptuous Wed-
" ding at *Cana* of *Galilee*, is enough to
" turn our Stomachs againſt all the reſt.
" It is in itſelf enough to beget in us
" an ill opinion of *Jeſus*, and to prepoſſeſs
" us with an averſion to his Religion,
" without farther Examination into it.
" It is enough to make us ſuſpect his o-
" ther Miracles, of what name ſoever,
" to be of a baſe, magical, and diaboli-
" cal Extraction; or he had never ſet
" up for a Divine worker of Miracles
" with ſo ill a grace. Would any ſo-
" ber, grave, ſerious and divine Perſon,
" as you Chriſtians ſuppoſe *Jeſus* to have
" been, have vouchſaf'd his Preſence at
" a Wedding, where ſuch Levities, Di-
" verſions and Exceſſes (in our Nation of
" the *Jews*, as well as in all others)
" were indulg'd on ſuch Occaſions, as
" were not fit to be ſeen, much leſs
" countenanc'd by the *Saint*, you would
" make of him. If your *Jeſus*, his Mo-
" ther, and his Diſciples had not been
" merry Folks in themſelves, they would

" have

" have declined the Invitation of the " *Bridegroom*, nay, if they had been at " all graver and more ſerious People " than ordinary, no Invitation had been " given to ſuch *Spoil-Sports:* But boon " Companions they were, and of comi- " cal Converſation, or there had been " at a Wedding no Room for them. You " Chriſtians may fancy, what you pleaſe, " of *Jeſus* and his Mother's Saintſhip; " but the very Text of the Story im- " plies they were Lovers of good Fel- " lowſhip and exceſs too, upon occa- " ſion; or he had never, upon her Inti- " mation, turn'd ſo large a quantity of " Water into Wine, after all or moſt of " the Company were far gone with it. " You may ſuppoſe, if you pleaſe, that " all were ſober, and none intoxicated, " and that the want of Wine pro- " ceeded from the abundance of Com- " pany, rather than exceſs in drinking; " but why then did *John* the *Evange- liſt* uſe the word μεθυσθῶσι, which im- " plies they were more than half ſeas " over? And if *Jeſus* and his Mother " had not both a mind to *top* them up; " the one would not have requeſted, nor " the other have granted a Miracle to " that purpoſe. Whether *Jeſus* and his " Mother themſelves were at all *cut*, as

" were

" were others of the Company, is not " ſo certain. She might be an abſtemi- " ous Dame for ought we know; tho if " old Stories are true of her familiarity " with a *Soldier*, of whom came her " *chara Deûm Soboles*, in all probabi- " lity, ſhe would take a *Dram* and a *Bot-* " *tle* too. But it looks as if *Jeſus* him- " ſelf was a little *in* for't, or he had " never ſpoke ſo waſpiſhly and ſnap- " piſhly to his Mother, ſaying, *Woman*, " *what have I to do with thee? mine* " *Hour is not yet come:* which was ve- " ry unbecoming of a dutiful Son, who, " excepting when he ran away from " his Parents, and put them to (32) " *Sorrow* and *Trouble* to look him up, " was, and is ſtill in heaven, ſay the " *Roman Catholicks*, a moſt obedient Child. " You modern Chriſtians may put what " Conſtruction you can upon the words " above of *Jeſus* to his Mother, to ſalve " his Credit; but the Fathers of your " Church (33) confeſs them to be a ſharp " and ſurly Reply to her, which, if it " did not proceed from the natural bad-

(32) Luke ii. 48.

(33) Chriſtus aſperius reſpondit, quid tibi & mihi Mulier? *St. Chryſoſt. in Loc. Johan.* Vide & *Theophylact. in Loc.*

" neſs

" neſs of his Temper, derived, *ex traduce*,
" from his ſuppoſed Father yet, was cer-
" tainly the effect of Drinking; and
" that's the more likely, becauſe it is
" a *broken* and *witleſs* Sentence, ſuch as
" *Fuddlecaps* utter by halves, when the
" *Wine's in*, and the *Wit's out*. Your
" modern *Commentators* are ſadly puz-
" led to make good Senſe of this bro-
" ken and abrupt Sentence of *Jeſus*, and
" a pertinent Reply of it, to what his
" Mother ſaid to him, *they have no*
" *Wine:* If you will bear with me, I'll
" help you out at this dead lift, and
" give you the true meaning of it *thus*.
" *Jeſus*'s Mother being appriſed of a
" deficiency of Wine, and willing, as well
" as the *Bridegroom*, that the Company
" ſhould be thorowly merry before they
" parted, intimates to her Son, (whom
" ſhe knew to be initiated in the My-
" ſterys of *Bacchus*) *that they had no*
" *Wine:* But before ſhe could finiſh her
" Requeſt to him, He, miſtaking her
" meaning, imagines, ſhe was caution-
" ing againſt drinking more Wine, and
" exhorting him to go home, where-
" upon he takes her up ſhort and quick,
" ſaying, *Woman, what have you to do*
with me? (for that too is the *Engliſh*
" of the *Greek*) I'll not be interrupted

" in my Cups, nor break Company;
" *for mine Hour is not yet come* to de-
" part : But after he rightly apprehended
" her, he goes to work, and rather than
" the Company ſhould want their *Fill*,
" by trick of Art, like a *Punch-maker*,
" meliorates Water into what they call'd
" Wine. That this is the obvious Inter-
" pretation, and natural Paraphraſe of the
" Words before us, ſhall be try'd by the
" abſurd Comments now-a-days put up-
" on them, that are enough to make a
" conſiderate Man laugh, if not hiſs at
" them.

" Some antient Hereticks (34), very
" gravely infer'd from this Expreſſion,
" *Woman, what have I to do with thee*,
" that *Mary* was neither a Virgin, nor
" *Jeſus* her Son; or he had never ac-
" coſted her with ſuch blunt Language,
" that implys, they could not be ſo a-
" kin to each other. This was a per-
" plexity to St. *Auguſtin*, and gave him
" ſome trouble to explain the Expreſ-
" ſion, conſiſtently with her Virginity
" (for all ſhe cohabited with the old Car-
" penter) and his Filiation. But this
" being a quibble, that has been long
" ſince dropt, I ſhall not revive, nor in-

(34) Vide Sanctum Auguſtinum. *In Loc. Johan.*

" ſiſt

" ſiſt on it. But that the Expreſſion
" above do's ſuppoſe a little Inebriation
" in *Jeſus*, I may averr, neither is
" there a better Solution to be made of
" it.

" The Fathers of your Church, be-
" ing ſenſible of the abſurdity, abrupt-
" neſs, impertinence, pertneſs, and ſenſleſ-
" neſs of the Paſſage before us accord-
" ing to the Letter, had recourſe to a
" myſtical and allegorical Interpretation,
" as the only way to make it conſiſtent
" with the Wiſdom, Sobriety and Duty
" of the Holy *Jeſus*. But you *Moderns*,
" abandoning Allegories and Myſteries in
" Miracles, have endeavour'd, I ſay, to
" put other Conſtructions upon it, as may
" comport with the Letter and Credit of
" Jeſus: But how inſipid and ſenſleſs
" they are, I appeal to a reaſonable Man,
" who will give himſelf the trouble to
" conſult them, upon the Place, and
" ſave me the pains of a tedious and
" nauſeous Work to recount them for
" him.

" But to humour the Chriſtian Prieſt-
" hood at this Day, I will ſuppoſe that
" *Jeſus*, and his Mother, and Diſciples,
" tho Fiſhermen, to have been all ſober,
" grave, and ſerious at this Wedding, ſui-
" tably to the Opinion that their Fol-

" lowers now would have us to enter-
" tain of them. But then it is hard to
" conceive them, leſs than Spectators and
" even Encouragers of Exceſs and Intem-
" perance in others; or *Jeſus*, after their
" more than ſufficient drinking for the ſa-
" tisfaction of Nature, had never turn'd
" W t r into Wine, nor would his Mo-
" ther have requeſted him to do it, if, I
" ſay, they had not a mind, and took
" Pleaſure in it too, to ſee the Company
" quite *ſtitch'd up.*

" A ſober, prudent and wiſe Philoſo-
" pher or *Magician*, in the place of
" *Jeſus*, if he had an Art or Power to
" turn Water into Wine, would never
" have exercis'd it upon ſuch an occa-
" ſion; no, not to pleaſe his beſt Friends,
" nor in obedience to the moſt indul-
" gent Parent. What would he have
" ſaid in ſuch a Caſe? *That* the Com-
" pany had drank ſufficiently already,
" and there was no need of more Wine:
" The Bridegroom had kindly and plen-
" tifully entertain'd his Gueſts, and he
" would not for the Honour of God,
" who had endow'd him with a divine
" Power, be at the Expence of a Mi-
" racle to promote the leaſt Intemperance.
" Whether ſuch a Speech and Reſolu-
" tion in *Jeſus*, upon this occaſion,

" would

" would not have been more commen-
" dable, than what he did, let any one
" judge.

" If I was a Chriſtian, I would, for
" the Honour of *Jeſus*, renounce this
" Miracle, and not magnify and extol
" it as a divine and good Act, as many
" now-a-days do. I would give into,
" and contend for the Truth of *that*
" *Gloſs*, which the *Gentiles* of old (35)
" by way of Objection put upon it,
" *viz. That the Company having ex-*
" *hauſted the Bridegroom's Stock of Wine,*
" *and being in Expectation of more*;
" Jeſus, *rather than the Bridegroom ſhould*
" *be put to the Bluſh for deficiency,*
" *palm'd a falſe Miracle, by the help*
" *of the Governour of the Feaſt, upon*
" *a drunken Crew*; *that is, having ſome*
" *ſpirituous Liquors at hand, mingled*
" *them with a quantity of Water, which*
" *the Governour of the Feaſt vouch'd*
" *to be incomparable good Wine, mira-*
" *culouſly made by* Jeſus: *and the Com-*
" *pany being, thro' a vitiated Palate,*
" *uncapable of diſtinguiſhing better from*
" *worſe, and of diſcovering the Fraud,*
" *admired the Wine and the Miracle*;
" *and applauded* Jeſus *for it, and per-*

(35) Apud St. Chryſoſtomum *in Loc. Johan.*

haps

" *haps became his Disciples upon it.* If " I, I say, was a Disciple of *Jesus*, I " would give this Story such an old " Turn for his Credit. And I appeal " to indifferent Judges, whether such a " daubing of the Miracle, to remove the " Offence of *Infidels* at this Day, would " not be polytically and wisely done of " me. Whether modern Christians may " be brought into such a Notion of " this supposed Miracle, I know not; " but really there is Room enough to " suspect such a Fraud in it.

" But supposing *Jesus*'s Change of " Water into Wine to have been a real " Miracle; none commission'd of God " for the Reformation and Instruction " of Mankind would ever have done it " here. Miracles (as Mr. *Chandler* (36) " says excellently well) *must be such* " *things, as that it is consistent with* " *the perfections of God, to interest* " *himself in*; and again, *they must ar-* " *gue not only the Power of God, but* " *his Love to Mankind, and his Inclina-* " *tion to do them good*; which this of " *Jesus* is so far from, that it has " an evil Aspect and Tendency, as is " above represented; consequently it is

(36) *Vindication of the Christian Religion*, p. 82.

" to

« to be rejected, and no longer esteem'd
« a divine Miracle; neither is *Jesus* to
« be received as a Revealer of God's
« Will for it, as Mr. *Chandler* will bear
« me witness.

« No doubt on't, but you Christian
« Priests would have us *Jews* and *In-*
« *fidels*, to believe the whole Com-
« pany at this Wedding, for all what
« is intimated by St. *John* to the con-
« trary, to consist of sober and demure
« Saints. I will suppose so? but then,
« what occasion had they at all for
« Wine? What reason could there be
« for God's Power to interpose and make
« it, especially in so large a quantity,
« for them? I can conceive none. If
« any of the Company had been taken
« with fainting Fits; and *Jesus* for
« want of a Cordial Bottle, had created
« a chearing Dram or two, I could not
« have found fault with it; tho even
« here, if he had restored the *Patient*
« with a word of his Mouth, it had
« been a better Miracle than making
« of Wine for him: But that he should
« make for a Company of Sots, a large
« quantity of Wine, of no less than
« twelve or eighteen Firkins of *English*
« Measure, enough to intoxicate the
« whole Town of *Cana* of *Galilee*, is

« what

" what can never be accounted for by " a Chriſtian, who ſhould, one would " think, wiſh this Story, for the Repu- " tation of *Jeſus* expunged out of the " New Teſtament.

" Beſides, if *Jeſus* had really and mi- " raculouſly made Wine, which no Power " or Art of Man could do, he ſhould, " to prevent all ſuſpicion of deceit in " the Miracle, have done it without " the uſe of Water. You Chriſtians ſay, " he is the original Cauſe of all Things " out of Nothing; why then did he " not (37) create this Wine out of no- " thing? why did he not order the " Pots to be emptied of their Water, " if there was any in them, and then " with a word of his Mouth command " the filling them with Wine inſtead of " it? Here had been an unexceptiona- " ble Miracle, which no *Infidels* could " have cavil'd at, for any thing, but the " *needleſſneſs* of it. But this ſubject " Matter of Waters ſpoils the Credit of " the Miracle. The Water-Pots, it ſeems, " are to be fill'd before *Jeſus* could do

(37) Sed quanam gratia, antequam implerentur, non fecit Miraculum, quod longè fuiſſet admirabilius? Siquidem aliud eſt ſubjectæ Materiæ qualitatem mutare, aliud ipſam ſubſtantiam ex nihilo facere. *Chryſoſ. in Loc.*

" the

" the notable Feat; is not this enough
" to make us think, that *Jesus* was but
" an artificial *Punch-maker?* Could not
" he create Wine without Water for a
" Transmutation? Yes, you'll say he
" could: what was the Reason then, that
" he did not? This is a reasonable Ques-
" tion to a learned Priesthood; and a ra-
" tional Answer should be given to
" it. And a Question too it is that
" heretofore has been under debate.
" Some said that the Water might be
" used to abate of the (38) immensity
" of the Miracle, which otherwise for
" its greatness might have surpass'd all
" belief. But this Reason will not do.
" A Miracle can't be too great in itself,
" if well attested, to transcend Credit:
" but it may easily be too little to con-
" ciliate the Faith of a Free-Thinker.
" The Fathers of your Church fetch'd a
" Reason, for the use of Water here,
" from the Mystery; but since Mysterys
" on Miracles are set aside by the Priest-
" hood of this Age, they are to assign
" another and good Reason of their own;
" or this Miracle is to be rejected, as a
" piece of Art and Craft in the Ope-

(38) Sæpe obest Magnitudo, ne Miracula creditu sint facilia. *Theophylact. in Luc.*

" rator, if for no other Reaſon than this,
" that *Jeſus* uſed Water to make Wine.

" All that I have to ſay more to this
" Miracle, is, that it is to be wiſh'd, if
" *Jeſus* could turn Water into Wine, that
" he had imparted the Secret and Power
" to his Diſciples of the *Prieſthood* of
" all Ages ſince, which would have been
" of greateſt Advantage to them in this
" World. He has empower'd them, they
" ſay, to remit Sins, which few old
" Sinners think themſelves the leſs in
" danger for: And he has enabled them,
" ſome ſay, to tranſubſtantiate Bread in-
" to Fleſh, and Wine into Blood,
" which none but fooliſh and ſuperſti-
" tious Folks believe they ever did:
" And he promiſed to inveſt them with
" a Power to do greater Miracles than
" himſelf, even to remove Mountains,
" and to curſe Trees; but I thank God,
" they never were of ſo ſtrong a Faith,
" as to put it in Practice, or we might
" have heard of the *natural* ſtate, as well
" as we do now of the *civil* ſtate of ſome
" Countrys, ruin'd and overturn'd by
" them. But this Power to tranſmute
" *Water into Wine*, without Labour and
" Expence, would have been of better
" worth to them, than all their other
" Prieſtly Offices. Not, that our Con-

" duits

" duits would thereupon run with Wine,
" inſtead of Water; or that Wine would
" be cheaper and more plentiful than it
" is now, excepting among themſelves,
" if they could withal curſe Vineyards.
" They would make the beſt Penny they
" could of their divine Power. And as
" ſurely as they can now ſell the Water-
" drops of their Fingers at a Chriſtening,
" at a good Rate, they would ſet a better
" Price on their miraculouſly made Wine,
" and give a notable Reaſon for its dear-
" neſs, *viz.* that Miracles ſhould not be
" *cheap*, which would bring them into
" Contempt, and leſſen the Wonder and
" Admiration of them."

So ends the Invective of a ſuppos'd Jewiſh *Rabbi* againſt this Miracle; which our *Divines*, as well as myſelf, are to conſider of an Anſwer to. Whether they ſhall think themſelves able to anſwer the rational Parts of it, conſiſtently with the Letter, I know not; but I own myſelf unable, and believe it impoſſible for them, to do it: And therefore they muſt of neceſſity go along with me to the myſtical Interpretation of the Fathers; or this Miracle will turn to the diſhonour of *Jeſus*, and diſadvantage of his Religion.

Juſtin Martyr (39) ſays, it is abſurd to take the Stories of the Marriages and Concubinages of the *Patriarchs* of the Old Teſtament in a literal Senſe. And indeed, literally conſider'd, they are ſome of them too luſcious Tales to be related by divine and inſpired Penmen: whereupon he, as well as St. *Paul* and *Philo Judæus* (40), turn thoſe Stories, for the Honour of God and Edification of his Church, into an Allegory. Conſequently, if *Juſtin* had had an occaſion to ſpeak of this Marriage before us, there's no doubt on't, but he would have made Myſtery of all and every Part of it.

To the ſame purpoſe *Origen* (41) ſays, "That ſince the Law is a ſhadow of "good Things to come, and writes ſome-"times of Marriages and of Husbands "and Wives; we are not to underſtand "it of Marriages according to the Fleſh, "but of the ſpiritual Marriage between "Chriſt and his Church. As for Inſtance, "*Abraham* had two Sons, *&c.* here we "ought not to confine our Thoughts to "carnal Marriages, and their Offſprings; "but to extend them to the Myſteries

(39) In Dialog. cum Tryphone, p. 364.
(40) In Lib. de Abrahamo.
(41) *In Matt. Tract.* xxii.

"here

" here ſignified. And there are almoſt a " thouſand other places in Scripture about " Marriages; but in every place (*unuſ-* " *quiſque Locus caſtum & divinum de* " *Nuptiis continet Intellectum ſecundum* " *Expoſitionem moralem*) is to have a di- " vine, moral, and myſtical Conſtruction " put on't. Whoever therefore reads the " Scriptures about Marriages, and under- " ſtands no more by them, than carnal " Marriages; he errs, not knowing the " Scriptures nor the Power of God." From hence may be eaſily concluded, what was *Origen*'s opinion about this Marriage in *Cana* of *Galilee*, if there were no other Paſſages in him for a Confirmation of it. But to come cloſer to the Purpoſe.

St. *Auguſtin* (42) ſays, there is Myſtery ſignified in the Story of this Marriage, as in all *Jeſus*'s Miracles, which it becomes us to open and ſearch for; till, if poſſible, we are *inebriated* with the ſpiritual and inviſible Wine, that *Jeſus* made

(42) Aliquid enim & in ipſis factis innuit nobis, puto, quia non ſine cauſa venit ad Nuptias. Excepto Miraculo, aliquid in ipſo facto Myſterii & Sacramenti latet. Pulſemus ut aperiet & de Vino inviſibili inebriet nos. *In Loc. Johan.*

at

at this Feaſt. And again (43) ſays, Let us then conſider the ſeveral Particulars of the Story, and what is meant by the ſix Waterpots; and the Water that is turn'd into Wine; and the Governor of the Feaſt; and who are the Bridegroom and the Bride; and who is the Mother of *Jeſus* in a Myſtery; and what is to be underſtood by the Marriage.

And again, ſays St. *Auguſtin* (44) there is Myſtery in this Marriage, or *Jeſus* upon no invitation had gone to it. The Bridegroom is our Lord himſelf, to whom it is ſaid thou haſt reſerv'd the good Wine of the Goſpel *until now*, that is, until the typified Time of the Celebration of this myſtical Marriage, which according to St. *Auguſtin* (45) is to be on the ſixth Age of the World, ſignified by the ſix Water-Pots, holding two or three Firkins apiece,

(43) Nihil dicemus, quid ſibi velint Hydriæ, quid Aqua in Vinum converſa, quid Architriclinius, quid Sponſus, quid Mater Jeſu in Myſterio, quid ipſæ Nuptiæ? *Ibid.*

(44) Per hoc invitatus Dominus venit ad Nuptias, ut oſtenderetur Sacramentam Nuptiarum, ——Illarum Nuptiarum Sponſus Perſonam Domini figurabat, cui dictum eſt, ſervaſti bonum Vinum uſque adhuc, Bonum Vinum id eſt Evangelium ſervaſti uſque adhuc. *Ibid.*

(45) Sex Hydriæ ſunt ſex Ætates Temporum capientes Prophetiam pertinentem ad omnes gentes ſive in duobus generibus hominum, id eſt, Judæis & Græcis, ſive in tribus propter Noe tres Filios. *Ibid.*

that

that is, all Mankind, as they are divided into the *two* ſorts of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, or into *three*, as they are deſcended of the *three* Sons of *Noah*.

And in another Place, the ſame St. *Auguſtin* interpreting this Story, ſays (46) thus; " Our Saviour is invited to a Mar-" riage; what can that mean but that the " Holy Spirit is courted and invocated by " the Church, wiſhing to be eſpouſed to " him? *Jeſus* comes with his Diſciples, " that is, into a holy Place of a Company " of Saints. *Mary* the Mother of our Lord " ſignifies to him, *that they have no Wine*; " ſo the Church makes known to him, " the Deficiency of the Spirit, which ſhe " waits for the Power of. And if *Jeſus* " calls *Mary*, a Woman; he means the " Church, who by Transfiguration may " be a Virgin, the Mother, the Spouſe of " Chriſt, and a Whore too."

(46) Vocatur Salvator ad Nuptias, hoc eſt, Eccleſiæ voto ſpiritus ſanctus invocatur.——Venit cum Diſcipulis ſuis, id eſt, in Loco ſancto, Turba ſanctorum. Mirabilia Dei Maria Mater expectat, hoc eſt, virtutem Chriſti expectat Eccleſia——Maria ait, ecce Vina deficiant, hoc eſt. Vinum Spiritus Eccleſia optat excipere. ——Numquid Mulierem dicit Jeſu Mariam, quæ Virgo poſt Pactum inventa eſt? Sed Eccleſiam allequitur, quæ non ſolam Mulier, ſed meretrix nuncupatur. *In Sermon* xcii. *Append.*

And

And again St. *Auguſtin* explaining (47) what is meant by the Water, and the Wine that it wou'd be turn'd into, at the Time of the ſpiritual Celebration of this Marriage of Chriſt with his Spouſe of the Church, ſays plainly enough, that by *Water* is meant the Letter of the Scriptures; and by the beſt *Wine* is to be underſtood ſpiritual Interpretations, which would tranſport the underſtandings of Men with divine knowledge; and warm their Hearts and Affections into a ſpiritual *Inebriation*; after the ſimilitude of Wine natural.

St. *Theophilus* of *Antioch*, a moſt antient Greek Commentator (who according to *Biſhop Smalbroke* ſhould ſtrictly adhere to the Letter) ſays (48), that by this Mar-

(47) Vinum multis Locis accipimus Scripturas Sanctas meraciſſimum Vigorem cœleſtis ſapientiæ continentes, quibus incaleſcant ſenſus & inebrientur Affectus. Operante Chriſto in Cana Galileæ Vinum defecit & Vinum fit, id eſt, Umbra removetur & Veritas præſentatur. Recedit Lex, Gratia ſuccedit. Carnalia ſpiritualibus commutantur. Bonum quidem Vinum eſt vetus Teſtamentum, ſed ſine ſpirituali Intellectu vaneſcit in Litera. *In Serm.* xc. *Append.* Sed illud quod in Litera Legis aquam ſapiebat, dum ſpiritualiter intelligi fecit, aquam in Vinum convertit. *In Sermon* xci. *Append.*

(49) Per Nuptias, Conjunctionem Chriſti & Eccleſiæ hoc eſt Veteris & Novi Teſtamenti Traditionem debemus accipere. Spouſus eſt Chriſtus. Architriclinius eſt Moſes. *In Loc. Johan.*

riage

ſtage is meant the Conjunction of Chriſt and his Church, as it is the Tradition of the Old and New Teſtament. And that *Jeſus* himſelf is the Bridegroom; and *Moſes* the Governor of the Feaſt.

Other Fathers, ſuch as St. *Cyril*, St. *Theophylact* and St. *Jerome* are of the ſame mind about the myſtical Interpretation of this Marriage, as might be prov'd by Paſſages out of them, if I had room here to cite them. But I muſt obſerve here, that according to the Fathers, the Story of this Marriage is but another Emblem of the Marriage of the Lamb with the Bride of the *New Jeruſalem*, ſpoken of in the *Revelations*, to which all the Fowls of the Air will be invited, that is, ſpiritual and heavenly minded Chriſtians, who (49) ſoar and fly aloft in their divine and ſublime Contemplations on the anagogical Senſe of the Scriptures, which will exhibit thoſe intellectual Dainties, they are there to be entertain'd with.

What I have here ſaid out of the Fathers to the Story of this Marriage, is enough to quicken our *Divines* to ſearch for the like myſtical Interpretation of the whole. The Part of it that's moſt

(49) Volucres Cœli ſunt verè puri & ad cæleſtis ſapientiæ Cognitionem evolare parati. *Clem. Alex. Strom. L.* iv.

difficult to be ſpiritually expounded, is that ſaying of *Jeſus* to his Mother, *Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine Hour is not yet come.* For the clear Interpretation of which, I own, I meet with little in the Fathers. But St. *Auguſtin* (50) aſſures us, there's latent Myſtery in the words. How then ſhall we come at it? Why, if we caſt away the *Interrogation*, and look upon the Sentence, as ellyptical, like an infinite number of prophetical ones, the Senſe paraphraſtically, and agreeably to the reſt of the Myſtery, ariſes thus: In anſwer to the Woman of the Church's Expectation of the Wine of the Spirit; *Jeſus* will tell her or make her to underſtand of what importance it is to her (and himſelf) to be ſupply'd with that myſtical Wine to her Edification, which it was not his time to pour forth upon the Church, till the Celebration of his Nuptials with her.

And thus have I done with the Miracle of *Jeſus*'s turning Water into Wine at a Marriage of *Cana* of *Galilee*. Whether it be not an abſurd and offenſive Story acording to the Letter, let any

(50) Quid mihi & tibi eſt, Mulier? Procul dubio, Fratres, latet ibi aliquid Myſterii. *In Loc. Johan.*

one

one judge. If the ſuppoſed Jewiſh *Rabbi* has forced a worſe Senſe upon it, than it will naturally bear, our *Clergy* may expoſtulate with him for it, which they hardly will any otherwiſe than by Exclamations againſt him, without Reaſon and Authority. But in the myſtical Operation of this Miracle at the Marriage of Chriſt with his Church, there will be the Wiſdom and Power and Goodneſs of God viſible. And it will be a demonſtration of *Jeſus*'s *Meſſiahſhip*, in as much as the Water of the Letter of the Law and the Prophets can't be turn'd into the Wine of ſpiritual Interpretations, but we muſt diſcern how he is the Accompliſher and Fulfiller of them. And ſo I paſs to an

11. *Eleventh* Miracle of Jeſus, *viz.* (51) That of his healing a Paralytick, for whom the Roof of the Houſe was broken up to let him down into the Room where *Jeſus* was.

And this Story (without excepting that of the Pool of *Bethesda*) is the moſt monſtrouſly abſurd, improbable and incredible of any according to the Letter. There is not one Miracle of *Jeſus* ſpecifically related, that does not labour un-

(51) Matt. ix. Mark ii. Luke v.

der more or leſs Abſurdities, either in Subſtance or Circumſtance: But this, for number and greatneſs of Abſurdities, I think ſurpaſſes them all: And the Abſurdities of it too are ſo obvious and ſtare a Man in the Face, that I wonder they are hitherto overlook'd, and that conſiderate and intelligent Perſons have not before now heſitated and boggled at them. If Intereſt had not blinded the Eyes of our learned *Clergy*, they would eaſily have deſcry'd the Incredibilities and Abſurdities of this Story; and in another *Impoſtor*'s Caſe preſently have pointed them out to the ridicule of his Admirers and Adorers.

If a Man was to torture his Brains for the Invention of a romantick Tale of improbable and ſurprizing Circumſtances, that he might, withal, hope to palm for a Truth, if it was but for a Week or a Day, upon the Faith and Underſtanding of the Credulous; he could never have preſumed, I think, ſo far upon the weakneſs of their Intellects, as to imagine any thing ſo groſly and notoriouſly contradictory to Senſe and Reaſon, would have gone down with them, as is *this* before us, which has paſs'd currently thro' many Ages of the Church, has been read with attention by the Learned, and revered

vered by the reſt of Chriſtians, without any exception, heſitation, or doubt of the Truth of it. In ſhort, ſo palpable is the falſity of the Story of this Miracle, that it requires no Sagacity to detect it; and was it not for the ſake of the Myſtery more than to expoſe the Folly of the *Clergy* in believing of it, I had never beſtow'd the following Pains on it.

The People, it ſeems, ſo preſs'd and throng'd about the Door of the Houſe, where *Jeſus* was, that the Paralytick and his Bearers could not get near it. What did they ſo throng and preſs for? Was it to ſee *Jeſus*, who was *without Form and Comelineſs*, according to the Prophet *Iſaiah*; or, who was one of the moſt graceful of the Sons of Men, as *Painters* and *Publius Lentulus* do deſcribe him? This could not be the Reaſon of the Croud. Tho a Perſon extraordinary, either for Beauty or Deformity may attract the Eyes of the People, and occaſion too a Throng about him; yet this could be no Reaſon for a *Preſs* about *Jeſus*, at *Capernaum*, where he dwelt, and was commonly ſeen and well known.

Was it then to hear him preach? Nor this neither. Tho an excellent Preacher does ſometimes, and a very indifferent one does oftener draw multi-

tudes

tudes after him; yet *Jesus*, as a Prophet, was without Honour at *Capernaum*, his own Country; consequently, it is not to be supposed that, for his Doctrine, he was so much follow'd here, tho we read, that he *preach'd the Word unto them.*

Was it then to behold him working of Miracles and curing of the diseased? This is the likeliest Reason of the Crouds and Throng about him. And perhaps it was a Day appointed beforehand for his healing of the diseased, which might occasion a more than ordinary Concourse of the People. But then this Reason would have induced the People to make way for the *Lame*, *Blind*, and *Paralyticks* to come to *Jesus*; or they frustrated their own Hopes and Expectations of seeing Miracles wrought; and acted more unreasonably than ever Mob did, or can be supposed to do.

But whatever was the Reason of this tumultuous Crouding, which is hard to be accounted for; it's said, the poor *Paralytick* with his Bearers could not get to the Door of the House for the *Press*, and therefore in all haste is he haul'd to the Top of the House, and let down, thro' a breach of the Roof, into the Room where *Jesus* was. What need

was

was there of ſuch haſte and pains to get to *Jeſus* for a Cure? It was but waiting a while, not many Hours, and in all probability the Tumult would be appeas'd, and acceſs eaſily had to him. But that the Bearers of the poor Man ſhould enterpriſe a trouble and difficulty, that could not require leſs Time, than the Tumult could be ſuppoſed to laſt, is a little ſtrange and ſomewhat incredible.

St. *Chryſoſtom* ſays (52), that the *Paralytick* ſaw that the Market-place or Street was throng'd with People, who had obſtructed all Paſſage to the Houſe, where *Jeſus* was; and yet he did not ſo much as ſay to his Friends and Bearers, " What's the Reaſon of this Tu-" mult? Let's ſtay till it is appeas'd, " and the Houſe clear'd of the People, " who ere long will depart; and then " we ſhall privately and quietly get ad-" mittance to Jeſus," But why did he not ſay ſo? Any one beſide himſelf and his Bearers, if they had any Reaſon and

(52) Paralyticus repletum videret Theatrum, Aditus intercluſos, Portum obſeptum, ——Non tamen dixit Propinquis ſuis, quid hoc Rei eſt? Expectemus, quouſque Domus evacuetur, Theatrum dimittatur, recedent, qui congregati ſunt, poterimus privatim ad illum accedere. *In Homil. de hoc Paralyt.*

Senſes

Senſes about them, would have ſo argued. St. *Chryſoſtom* ſays, it was their *Faith* that made them in ſuch haſte to get to *Jeſus*: But I ſhould have thought their *Faith* might have work'd *Patience*, and diſpoſed them to ſtay till Jeſus could come out to them, or they get in to him: And it is an Addition to the ſtrangeneſs and incredibility of the Story, that it did not.

But ſuppoſing this *Paralytick* in ſuch haſte and danger of Life, that he could not wait the diſperſion of the Tumult, but, for want of a free entrance at the Door, is, coſt what it will, to be rais'd to the top of the Houſe, and a breach muſt be there made for him. The Queſtion is, whether ſuch an Enterprize was or could be feiſable and practicable? I have no Conception of the poſſibility of it. If they could not get to the Door of the Houſe for the Preſs; of conſequence they could not come at the Sides of it. How ſhould they? over the Heads of the People? That's not to be imagined; conſequently here's another difficulty in the Story, that renders it yet more ſtrange and incredible.

But, without queſtioning the poſſibility and eaſineſs of getting the *Paralytick* and his Couch over the Heads of the

the Mob, to the ſides of the Houſe; thither he is brought, where we now behold him and his Bearers with their Pullies, Ropes, and Ladders (that were not at hand, nor could ſuddenly be procured) hauling and heaving him to the top of the Houſe. Of what height the Houſe was, is not of much Conſequence. Some for the Credit of the Story may ſay (53), it was a *very low one*; tho antient and modern *Commentators* are pretty well agreed, that it was an *upper-Room*, where *Jeſus* was; conſequently the Houſe was at leaſt two Stories high: But if it was much higher, I'll allow that Art and Pullies (which they wanted for the preſent) would raiſe the Man and his Bed to the top of it: So we will not diſpute nor differ upon that matter. On the top of the Houſe then, we are now to behold the *Paralytick* and his Bearers with their Hatchets and Hammers, *&c.* (which they forgot to bring with them, for they could not think of any uſe they ſhould have of them) uncovering the Roof of the Houſe; breaking up *Tiles*, *Spars*, and *Rafters*, and making a Hole, capacious enough for the Man and

(53) Dicet aliquis valde dimiſſum fuiſſe Locum, à quo per Tegulas depoſuerunt Paralytici Lectum. *Johan. Nepot. Hieroſ. in Lec. Luc.*

his Bed to be let thro'. An odd, ſtrange, and unaccountable Work *this*, which, if they had not been cunning Fellows, would hardly have enter'd into their Heads to project. But at work they are, when it was well, if Jeſus and his Diſciples eſcaped with only a broken Pate, by the falling of Tiles, *&c.* and if the reſt were not almoſt ſmother'd with the Duſt; for it was over their Heads that the breach was made. Where was the good Man of the Houſe all this while? Would he ſuffer his Houſe to be thus broken up, and not command them to deſiſt from their fooliſh and needleſs Attempt, till the Mob was quell'd, and there was a free entrance at the Door of his Houſe, which could not be long firſt? Is there nothing in all this, of difficulty and obſtruction in the way of the belief of this Story?

Some modern *Commentators*, being aware of theſe difficulties in this Story, and willing to reconcile Men to the eaſier belief of it, ſay, as *Druſius* (54) did, that the Houſes of *Judæa* were *flat-roof'd, and not ridg'd:* And Doctors, *Lightfoot* and *Whitby* (55) ſay, there was

(54) Judæorum Tecta plana erant, & non in Coni formam faſtigiata. *In Loc. Luc.*

(55) *In Loc. Marci.*

a Door on their flat Roofs, by which the *Jews* uſed to aſcend to the top of their Houſes, where they diſcours'd on the Law and religious Matters; and that it was thro' ſuch a Door, by a little widening of the ſides of it, that the *Paralytick* was let down in the preſence of *Jeſus*. To which Opinion I would yield, if it was not liable to theſe Objections, *viz.* that it is not reconcilable to what St. *Luke* ſays, of *their letting the Paralytick down thro' the Tiling with his Couch, in the midſt, where Jeſus was*; nor hardly conſiſtent with what St. *Mark* ſays, of their *uncovering* and *breaking up the Roof of the Houſe:* which Expreſſions the *Evangeliſt* had never uſed, if their had been a Door for him to deſcend by. But to indulge *Lightfoot* and *Whitby* in their Notion; I may ask them, what occaſion was their then of widening the door-way, and breaking down the ſides of it? They'll ſay, becauſe the Paſſage otherwiſe was too narrow, for the Man's Couch to get thro.' Why then did not they take him out of his Couch and let him down in a Blanket, a Chair, or a Basket? Or rather, why did not *Jeſus*, to prevent this Trouble and Damage to the Houſe, aſcend thro' this Door, to the Top of it, and their ſpeak the healing

Word to this poor Man? To say, that *Jesus* could not or would not go up to the Paralytick, I would not, for Fear of an Imputation of Blasphemy against me. Our *Divines* therefore are to look for, what they'll hardly find, an Answer to the said Question, which will consist with the Wisdom, the Goodness and Honour of *Jesus*; or here will be another and insuperable Bar to the Credibility of this Story.

In short, there are more and greater Difficultys affecting the Credit of this Miracle, on the side of *Jesus*, than any before urg'd. Could not he, as it was antiently (56) objected, have made the Access to himself more easy? Could not he, to prevent all this Trouble and Pains of getting to the Top of the House; and of breaking up the Roof of it, have desired or even forc'd the People to make way for this poor Man and his Bearers? This was not impossible for him to do. If it was hard for another; it was not for him, who was omnipotent. He that could drive his Thousands before him out of the Temple; and draw as many after him into the wilderness, might surely, by Force or Per-

(56) Numquid enim facilem illi potuit Accessum reddere? *Apud Chrysostom. de hoc Paralyt.*

suasion

ſuaſion have made the People, how unreaſonably mobbiſh ſoever, to retreat. And why did he not? Without a good and ſatisfactory Anſwer, which I can't conceive, to this Queſtion, here is the moſt unaccountable and incredible part of the whole Story, that reflects on the Wiſdom, the Power and Goodneſs of *Jeſus*. If there had been no other abſurd Circumſtances of it, this is enough to ſpoil its Credit, ſo far as that I believe it impoſſible for *Miniſters* of the *Letter*, with all their Wit, Penetration and Sagacity to get over it.

Believe then the Story of this Miracle, thus taken to Pieces, who can? It is ſuch an Accumulation of Abſurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities, that a Man of the moſt eaſy Faith, if he at all think, can't digeſt. Its not credible, I ſaid, to ſuppoſe, the People of *Capernaum*, where *Jeſus* dwelt, and was well known and little admired, would at all *preſs* to ſee or hear him: And if the occaſion of their Concourſe was to behold his Miracles; it is leſs reaſonable to think they would tumultuate to their own diſappointment; but rather make way for the diſeaſed, for the ſatisfaction of their own Curioſity, to come to him: And if they did mob it to their own diſappointment, about the Door

Door of the Houſe; it was next to impoſſible for the poor Man and his Couch to be heav'd over their Heads, and rais'd to the top of it: More unreaſonable yet to think, the maſter of the Houſe would ſuffer the Roof of it to be ſo broken up: But moſt of all againſt Reaſon to ſuppoſe, *Jeſus* would not give forth the healing word, and prevent all this Labour, or by his divine Power diſperſe the People, that the *Paralytick* might have preſent and eaſy acceſs to him.

Whether all this be not abſolutely ſhocking of the Credit of this Story, let my Readers judge. In my Opinion, no Tale more monſtrouſly romantick can be told. I don't here queſtion *Jeſus*'s Power to heal this Paralytick, nor the miraculouſneſs of the Cure of him: The trouble of that Queſtion is ſaved me, by the many other incredible Circumſtances of the Story, which are ſuch a Contradiction to Senſe and Reaſon, as is not to be equall'd, in any thing, that's commonly receiv'd and believ'd by Mankind. *Cicero* ſays, that there is nothing ſo abſurd, which ſome of the Philoſophers have not held. And they might and did, ſome of them, hold groſs Abſurdities. But the Letter of the Story of this Miracle before us, which is the Object of the Faith

of

of our learned Prieſthood at this Day is a match for the worſt of them.

But as abſurd, as this Story is, I expect that our *Clergy* will be diſguſted at my ludicrous diſplay of it; and that Arch-Deacon *Stubbs* in particular will again be ready to exclaim againſt me, and ſay, that this is turning a *miraculous Fact*, and a *divine Teſtimony* of our Religion into Ridicule. Wherepon it is to be wiſh'd, *that Arch-Deacon* would write, what would be a Pleaſure to ſee, a Vindication of this Story. If he can account for the poſſibility and credibility of the Letter of it, he ſhall have my leave to make another dull Speech in *Convocation* againſt me. And it is not unlikely, but he may ſay as much for it, as another Man: For as the Story is ſenſeleſs, ſo it is the better ſuited to his Head and Brains. But if he don't, I much queſtion, whether any other Clergyman of more Wit will, appear in Defence of it.

So abſurd is the Letter of this Story, that for the Honour of *Jeſus*, and Credibility of his Goſpel, it is abſolutely neceſſary to turn it into Allegory. To the Fathers then, let us go for their help in this Caſe. If they did not read me a better Lecture upon this Miracle, than do our modern

modern *Commentators*, I ſhould be almoſt tempted to renounce my Religion upon it: But as they have rationally and rightly inſtructed me in its true meaning, ſo I retain my Chriſtian Faith, and admire the Sublimity of the Myſtery, which I am now to give an account of.

By this *Paralytick*, St. *Hilary* (57) ſays, is to be underſtood *Mankind* of all Nations, which opinion too the Fathers held of the *Paralytick*, who was heal'd at the Pool of *Bethesda*. And by his Palſy is not meant any bodily Diſtemper, but the ſpiritual Palſy of the Soul, that is, as St. *Auguſtin* (58) and St. *Jerome* (59) interpret, a diſſoluteneſs of Morals, and an unſteadineſs of Faith and Principles, which is the Condition of Mankind at preſent, who wants *Jeſus*'s help for the Cure of it. *Euſebius Gallicanus* (60) ſays, our Saviour's words ſignify,

(57) In Paralytico Gentium univerſitas offertur medenda. *In Loc. Matt.*

(58) Paralyticus poteſt intelligi Anima diſſoluta Membris, id eſt, bonis operibus. *Inter. Quæſt. Evang.*

(59) Paralyſis Typus eſt Torporis, quo piger jacet in Malitia Carnis, habens deſiderium Salutis, & Torporis Ignavia & duplis Cogitationibus, ac ſi enervatus Membris oſtendit. *In Loc. Marci.*

(60) In hoc enim quod ait, remittuntur tibi Peccata, interiorem hominem, id eſt, ſpiritum paryliticum eſſe demonſtrat. Hoc enim non dixiſſet, ſi ad Corporis Infirmitatem reſpexiſſet. Non ideo Corpus ſanatur, quia Anima à peccatis liberatur. *In Homil. in Dominic.* xix. *poſt Pentecoſt.*

that

that it is not a bodily but a ſpiritual Diſeaſe here meant; or he had never ſaid to the Paralytick, *Son, thy Sins are forgiven thee*, which words reſpect the inward Man, and demonſtrate the Palſy here to be a diſeaſe of the Soul.

The Man ſick of the Palſy had *four Bearers*. And who are they myſtically in this Caſe? Why, the Fathers (61) underſtand by them the *four Evangeliſts*, on whoſe Faith and Doctrine Mankind is to be carry'd unto Chriſt; for no Soul can be brought unto him, for the Sanation of his Sins and Errors, but by theſe *four*.

But to the top of the Houſe is Mankind, thus paralytically diſeaſed, to be carry'd by the four Evangeliſts, his Bearers. And what then is this Houſe and its Top? The Houſe of *Jeſus* is the intellectual Edifice of the World, otherwiſe call'd Wiſdom's Houſe, of the beautiful Buildings of which the Scriptures prophetically

(61) Sed qui ſunt iſti quatuor, qui hunc Paralyticum portant & Domino offerunt. Per hos enim neſcio, qui melius quam quatuor Evangeliſtæ intelligi poſſunt. Nulla enim Anima niſi per iſtos Domino offertur, nulla Anima niſi per iſtorum fidem ſanatur. *Euſeb. Gallican. ibid.* Sum Paraliticus, quia non operantur & immobiles ſunt Vires Animæ meæ ad bonum, ſed ſi a quatuor Evangeliſtis geſtatus & adductus fuero ad Dominum, tunc audiam, remittuntur Peccata. *Theophylact. in Lcc. Marci.*

treat: therefore to the *ſublime Senſe* of the Scriptures, call'd the Top (62) of the Houſe, is a Man to be taken: He is not to abide in the *low and literal Senſe* (63) of them, where People *preſs* and ſtrive in vain to come to *Jeſus*. But if he is taken to the Sublimity of the Scriptures and there *open* (64) *the Houſe* of Wiſdom, he will preſently be admitted to the Preſence and Knowledge of *Jeſus*.

Venerable *Bede*, who is altogether a Tranſcriber of the Fathers, for which Reaſon I cite him among the Fathers, ſays (65), that by the *Tiles* of the Houſe

(62) Tectum Domus qua Chriſtus docet, aſcendendum, id eſt, Sacræ Scripturæ Sublimitas eſt appetenda. *Bedæ in Loc. Lucæ.*

(63) Non utique in Infimis exterius, qua turbæ tumultuantur remanendum, ſed Tectum Domus, &c. *Ibid.*

(64) Patefacto Tecto æger ad Jeſum ſummittitur, quia reſeratis Scripturarum Myſteriis, ad Notitiam Chriſti pervenitur. *Bedæ in Loc. Marci.* Eſt Paralyſis interior, ut pervenias ad Chriſtum forte enim latet Medicus & intus eſt, hoc eſt, iſte verus Intellectus in Scripturis occultus eſt) exponendo quod occultum eſt aperi Tectum, & depone Paraliticum. *Auguſtin. In Serm.* XLVI. *Seſt.* 13. Impediri turbis niſi Tecte id eſt operta Scripturarum aperiat, ut per hæc ad Notitiam Chriſti perveniat. *Ejuſdam in Quæſt. 41a in Evangel. Lucæ.*

(65) Et bene Domus Jeſu juxta alterius Evangeliſtæ Narrationem tegulis eſſe contecta reperitur, quia ſub contemptibili Literarum Velamine, ſi adſit, qui reſeret, divina ſpiritualis Gratiæ Virtus invenietur. Denudatio etenim Tegularum in Domo Jeſu, Apertio eſt, in utilitate Literæ, ſenſus ſpiritualis & arcanorum cœleſtium. *In Loc. Marci.*

ſpoken

ſpoken of in St. *Luke*, is meant the *Letter* of the Scriptures, which is to be laid open for the manifeſtation of Chriſt and of divine Myſteries to the healing of Man's ſpiritual Palſy, the unſteadineſs and diſſoluteneſs of his Morals and Principles.

So much, in ſhort, then to the myſtical Interpretation of the Story of this Miracle. The literal Senſe of it is ſo encumber'd with romantick Circumſtances, as are enough to turn a Man's Heart againſt Chriſtianity it ſelf: But in the Myſtery there will be a moſt ſtupendous Miracle, which will be not only an Argument of *Jeſus*'s divine Power, but of his *Meſſiahſhip*, as certainly as his Houſe of Wiſdom, of which the Scriptures write, is open'd to the Manifeſtation of his Preſence, and to the Cure of Mankind of his paralytical Diſeaſe, call'd an inſtability of Faith and Principles.

And thus have I, in this *Diſcourſe*, taken into Examination three more of *Jeſus*'s Miracles; which I ſubmit to the Judgment of my Readers, whether the literal Story of them does not conſiſt of Abſurdities, Improbabilities and Incredibilities according to the Propoſition before us; and whether there is not a neceſſity, for the Honour of *Jeſus*, to

turn them into prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what will be myſteriouſly and more wonderfully done by him.

My next *Diſcourſe*, if my mind hold, ſhall treat on the three Stories of *Jeſus*'s raiſing of the dead, *viz.* of the Widow of *Naim*'s Son, of *Jairus*'s Daughter, and of *Lazarus*; after which I will give the literal Hiſtory of Chriſt's Reſurrection, that ſandy Foundation of the Church, a Review; and ſo conclude my Diſcourſes on the Miracles of our Saviour.

To run thro' all the Miracles of *Jeſus*, and handle them in the manner I have done the foregoing, would be a long and tedious Work. But if our *Divines* ſhall think, I have ſelected only thoſe Miracles, which are obnoxious to Cavil and Ridicule; and have omitted others, that literally are a more unexceptionable Teſtimony of *Jeſus*'s divine Power, and Authority; I will, for their Satisfaction take more of them to Task, and give the Letter of their Stories, the like ludicrous treatment. If I miſtake not, the Miracles already ſpoken to, together with thoſe of *Jeſus*'s raiſing of the dead, and of his own Reſurrection, are the moſt famous and remarkable of any others: And according to the Obſervation I have made

made on the reſt, they are no leſs but rather more liable to Ridicule and Exception. But if any are of a contrary Opinion, and will let me know, which in their Judgment are more unexceptionable Miracles, I will vouchſafe them an Examination. I am ſure there is not one Miracle, which the Fathers of the Church did not turn into Allegory; and if we don't at this Day make myſtical Operations of them, they will none of them according to the Letter, ſtand their Ground, nor abide the Teſt of a critical Inquiry into them.

I don't expect, that this *Diſcourſe* will be any more pleaſing and acceptable to the *Clergy*, who are *Miniſters* of the *Letter* of *Jeſus*'s Miracles, as well as of the Prophecies of him, than any of my former: But their Diſpleaſure in the Caſe will give me no Diſturbance, nor am I concern'd about any Reſentment, they can make of it. If they are offended at theſe *Diſcourſes*, they ſhould as they came forth, have written ſolid Confutations of them, and ſo have prevented my Publication of any more of this kind: But inſtead of ſerious and potent Reaſonings againſt me, I have met with little elſe but oral Railings, Exclamations, Defamations, and attempts for Proſecution;

which

which have been so far from terrifying me, that they give me a secret Pleasure, and animate me to proceed in the Undertaking in Hand.

I did not much question but the *Bishop* of St. *Davids*, whom I look'd upon as a Person of Ingenuity and Learning, would before this Time, have publish'd somewhat in Confutation of one or other of my former *Discourses*. Whether he was not obliged to it, or to make me some publick Reparation of the Injury done to my Reputation, by his slanderous Sermon, I appeal now to the worshipful *Societys* for Reformation of Manners; to whom, and to other Civil Magistrates, I hope his Sermon, without Reason, will be a Caution, that no Pulpit-Invective move them to prosecute or think the worse of any Author.

Liberty of thinking, writing and judging for our selves in Religion is a natural, a Christan, and a protestant *Right*. It is a *Right* that the Magistrates as well as the Subject are interested in, and are to see to the Conservation of, or their Understandings as well as their Purses will be ridden and oppress'd by an ignorant and tyrannical Priesthood. I urge not this for my own security against Prosecution for Infidelity and Blasphemy, declaring that

that if the *Biſhops* of *London*, St. *Davids*, or *Arch-Deacon Stubbs*, who are zealous for Perſecution, will but engage me on the Stage of Controverſy, and make good their Accuſations againſt me, I will ſubmit to the worſt Puniſhment, that can be inflicted on the worſt Offender.

In the mean time I will go on with my Undertaking, to the advancement of Truth, and demonſtration of the *Meſſiahſhip* of the Holy *Jeſus*, to whom be Glory for ever, *Amen*.

F I N I S.

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A FIFTH

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR,

In VIEW of the present Controversy between *Infidels* and *Apostates.*

——————— *Ridiculum acri*
Fortius & melius magnas plerumq; secat Res.

By THOMAS WOOLSTON, B. D. sometime Fellow of *Sidney-College* in *Cambridge.*

LONDON:

Printed for the AUTHOR, and Sold by him next door to the *Star*, in *Aldermanbury*, and by the Booksellers of *London* and *Westminster*, 1728.

[Price One Shilling.]

TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God

THOMAS

Lord Biſhop of BANGOR.

My Lord,

Hatever we poor Authors *may ſometimes pretend to, by the Dedication of our Works to* Great *Men*; *it's certain we aim at nothing leſs than Rewards and Preferments, whether we deſerve them or not: That this is my Deſign in* Dedications, *is ſo apparent, that it's to no Purpoſe to deny or diſſemble it.*

Wherefore elſe have I made Choice of ſome of our Learned and Wealthy Biſhops *for the Patrons of theſe* Diſcourſes, *which I foreſaw would be grateful to their nice and critical Pa-*

lates? Wherefore elſe have I been ſo profuſe of ſuch Compliments on their Lordſhips, *as I was ſure, they would take great Pleaſure in? Wherefore elſe,* My Lord, *do I inſcribe* this *to your* Right Reverend *Name, but that I expect your Approbation of it, and hope for a Recompence, equal to the Honour, that is here done you.*

Some, who are envious, My Lord, *of my good Fortune in* Epiſcopal *Patrons, will not believe that I have receiv'd ſo much as one* Purſe *of* Gold *for any of my* Dedications; *but I would have ſuch Malignants to know, that the leſs I have receiv'd, the more there is behind: And I can moreover aſſure them, that their* Lordſhips *have it in their Heads and their Hearts too, highly to advance me in the World; and if their Endeavours for my Promotion fail not, I ſhall be a very* Great *Man.*

Such primitive Doctrine, My Lord, *as I have reviv'd, muſt, in the Judg-*

ment

ment of our Biſhops, *be deſerving of their diſtinguiſh'd Favours: And if they ſhould Deſign for me ſuch a* myſtical *Crown of Glory, as the* Gentile Prieſts *help'd ſome of the Fathers of the Church to; I profeſs without Diſſimulation, that, for all my Love to* Myſteries, *it will be more than I am ambitious of: But if the Honour is forc'd on me, it will be my Duty to their* Lordſhips, *to ſound an* allegorical *Trumpet of their Fame, that their Names, which might otherwiſe be ſoon forgotten, may be everlaſtingly remember'd for their Love and Good-will towards me.*

But the chief Foundation, My Lord, *of my Merits lies, they ſay, in my Treatment of the Miracles of our Saviour, after the Manner you handled a Scripture-Prophecy, of a* Man's kicking a Serpent on the Pate, for biting him by the Heels: *And if your* Lordſhip *got a* Welſh-Biſhoprick *upon it, what may not I expect for my more meritorious*

Works

Works of the ſame kind? The Great Mr. Scheme *has celebrated your Praiſe for that Effort of your Wit: And I muſt needs ſay, to your* Lordſhip's *Applauſe, that were not your Thoughts unhappily ſhackled with Intereſt and Subſcriptions, (an Unhappineſs you ſadly lament!) you would endeavour to make as pleaſant Work with the* Letter *of the* Old, *as I can do with that of the* New *Teſtament.*

I have not here Room, My Lord, *for a ſufficient amd deſerv'd* Encomium *on your* Uſe and Intent of Prophecy; *therefore muſt be content to ſay of it, in ſhort, that it is a moſt curious Piece of, what the Fathers call,* Engaſtromuthiſm; *or ſuch a ſingular Specimen of a Webb, ſpun out of a Man's own Bowels, as one of fewer Brains in his Head can hardly equal.*

It was wiſely done of your Lordſhip *to caution your Readers againſt taking your* Book *for an Anſwer to Mr.* Grounds; *otherwiſe it had not been im-*

impoſſible, but ſome others as well as the Worſhipful Benchers *of the* Temple *might have miſtaken the* Uſe *and* Intent *of it.*

After I had gone, thro' your beautifully-printed *Work, I wiſh'd,* My Lord, *for another* Decoration *of it, that ſome Annotations out of the Fathers had been ſubjoin'd to it. How would your Notions then and Theirs about Prophecy have ſtood as a* Foil *to each other! How ſhould I then have admired the Difference between a* Rich *Biſhop and a* Poor *Father as to Wit and Senſe! How ſhould I then have contemplated the Uſefulneſs of Eccleſiaſtical Wealth in our* Clergy *for the Underſtanding of the Inſpirations of the poor old Prophets!*

When your Lordſhip *is call'd upon for another Edition of your* Book, *vouchſafe me the Favour of making ſome marginal Remarks on it, which ſhall not be without their good Uſe. As you know, ſavoury Sawce makes ſome ſort of Food go down*

the

the better; so a little more of that Salt, which Mr. Scheme *has too sparingly sprinkled on your* Work, *will give your* Readers, *a right Relish of it: But whether I am indulg'd this Favour, or not; I shall take another opportunity, according to Promise elsewhere made, of testifying to the World, how much I am,*

My Lord,

The Admirer of your

October 25. 1728.

Use and

Intent of Prophecy,

Thomas Woolston.

A FIFTH

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR, &c.

ACcording to Promiſe in my laſt *Diſcourſe*, I am in *this* to take into Examination the three Miracles of *Jeſus*'s raiſing the dead, *viz.* Of *Iairus*'s Daughter (1); of the Widow of *Naim*'s Son (2); and of *Lazarus* (3): The litteral Stories of which I ſhall ſhow to conſiſt of Abſurdities, Im-

(1) Matt. ix. Mark v. Luke viii.
(2) Luke vii.
(3) John xi.

probabilities and Incredibilities, in Order to the myſtical Interpretation of them: And becauſe ſome of our *Biſhops* and *Clergy* were a little diſguſted at the ludicrous Treatment of the *Letter* of ſome foregoing Miracles, I will handle theſe with the more Caution; being as unwilling, as any Man of my primitive Faith can be, to offend weak Brethren.

Whether *Jeſus* rais'd any more from the dead, beſides the foreſaid three Perſons, is uncertain from the Evangelical Hiſtory. St. *Auguſtin* (4) thinks, he rais'd many others; and he founds his Opinion on the modeſt *Hyperbole* of St. *John*, who ſuppoſes (5) *the World it ſelf could not contain the Books that might be Written of Jeſus.* And *Euſebius Gallicanus*, of whoſe Mind entirely I am, ſays (6) the Reaſon lies in the Myſtery, why theſe *three*, and no more than theſe *three* Miracles of this Kind

(4) Quot autem mortuos viſibiliter ſuſcitaverat, quis novit? non enim omnia quæ fecit ſcripta ſunt, *Johannes* hoc dicit, multa alia fecit Jeſus, quæ ſi ſcripta eſſent, arbitror totum Mundum non poſſe Libros capere. Multi ergo ſunt alii ſine dubio ſuſcitati, ſed non fruſtra tres commemorati. *In Serm.* xcviii.

(5) John xxi. 25.

(6) Non autem vacat a Myſterio, quod, cum plures Dominus ſuſcitaverat, tres tantum Evangeliſtæ eum ſuſcitaſſe ſcripſerunt. *In Homil. Feriæ quintæ poſt Dominic. 4tam.*

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are recorded by the *Evangeliſts*. But ſince our *Divines* are averſe to Myſteries on Miracles, I would gladly know their Opinion, whether *Jeſus* rais'd any others from the dead, or not: I have made ſome ſearch into modern Writers for their Opinion in this Caſe, but cannot find it: And unleſs I knew their Opinion, it would be loſt Labour to argue againſt either Side of the Queſtion, and much more againſt both Sides of it: But I can aſſure our *Divines*, that, which Side of the Queſtion ſoever they ſhould hold, the Conſequence upon the Argument would be neither better nor worſe, than that they muſt of neceſſity eſpouſe the myſtical and allegorical Interpretation of theſe Miracles, or grant that *Jeſus* litterally rais'd none from the dead at all.

But waving that ſort of Argument for the preſent againſt the *Letter*; theſe three Miracles are reputed the greateſt that *Jeſus* wrought: And I believe, it will be granted on all hands, that the reſtoring a Perſon, indiſputably dead, to Life again, is a ſtupendous Miracle; and that two or three ſuch Miracles well circumſtanced, and credibly reported, are enough to conciliate the Belief of Mankind, that the Author of them was a divine Agent, and inveſted with the Power of God, or he

could not do them. But God knows, (and for the ſake of the Myſtery, I am not ſorry to ſay it) this is far from being the Caſe of theſe three Miracles before us, or of any one of them.

That theſe three Miracles are not equally great, but differ in Degree, is viſible enough to any one, that but curſorily reads, and compares their Stories one with another. The Fathers of the Church (7) have taken Notice of ſuch a Difference amonſt them. The greateſt of the three, and indeed, the (8) greateſt Miracle, that *Jeſus* is ſuppos'd to have wrought, is that of *Lazarus*'s Reſurrection; which, in Truth, was a moſt prodigious Miracle, if his Corps was putrified and ſtank; or if there were no juſt Exceptions to be made to the credibility of the Story. Next to that, in magnitude, is *Jeſus*'s raiſing of

(7) Suſcitaverat Dominus filiam Jairi Principis, Synagogæ, ſed adhuc mediante morte, adhuc viante Spiritu, adhuc Anima Clauſtra Tartari neſciente. Snſcitavit & unicum Matris filium, ſed ſic ut retineret Pheretrum, ut anticiparet Sepulchrum, ut Corruptionem ſuſpenderet, et præveniret fætorem; ut ante mortuo Vitam redderet, quam tota mortuus jura Mortis intraret. Circa Lazarum vero quod geritur totum ſingulare eſt, quem circa Vis tota Mortis impleta eſt. *In Pet. Chryſol. Serm.* lxiii.

(8) Inter omnia Miracula quæ fecit Dominus noſter Jeſu Chriſtus, Lazari Reſurrectio præcipue prædicatur. *St. Auguſt. in Loc. Johan.*

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the Widow's Son, as they were carrying him to his Burial: And a great Miracle it was to bring him to Life again; if none before or ſince had been miſtaken for dead, and carried to their Graves alive; or if no Impoſtor and his Confederates could frame ſuch a ſeemingly miraculous Scene, as is that whole Story, to his own Glory. The leaſt of the three is that of his raiſing *Iairus*'s Daughter, which in Appearance is ſo far from a Miracle, that according to the Story itſelf, ſhe was but aſleep, or by the ſhrieks of By-ſtanders frighted out of her Senſes for the preſent.

But however it really might be with theſe three ſuppoſed dead and revived Perſons; the Caſe of none of them was well enough circumſtanced to ſerve the Purpoſe of our *Divines*. I am apt to believe with the Fathers, that *Jeſus* actually did raiſe the dead; but then as theſe Miracles are only recorded for the ſake of the *Myſtery*, I affirm that none of them, as to the *Letter*, will abide the Teſt of a critical Examination, nor ſtand its Ground againſt ſuch Exceptions as may be made to it. If *Jeſus* was to raiſe any dead Bodies to Life, for a Teſtimony of his divine Power and Authority, he would and ſhould have made Choice of other dead Perſons, under other Circumſtances of Death; and

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the Hiſtory of their Reſurrection ſhould have been more credibly and carefully tranſmitted to Poſterity, ſo as there ſhould have been no Room left to make a reaſonable Doubt of the Truth of it. But this, I ſay, is not the Caſe in the Reſuſcitation of any of theſe Perſons, as will appear from the following Remarks and Obſervations upon them. And

1. Obſerve, that the unnatural and prepoſterous Order of Time, in which theſe Miracles are related, juſtly brings them all under ſuſpicion of Fable and Forgery. The greateſt of the three is indiſputably that of *Lazarus*'s Reſurrection; but ſince this is only mention'd by St. *John*, who wrote his Goſpel after the other *Evangeliſts*, and above ſixty Years, according to the beſt Computation, after our Lord's Aſcenſion; here is too much Room for Cavil and Queſtion, whether this Story be not entirely his Invention. What could be the Reaſon that *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, who all wrote their Goſpels before *John*, and many Years nearer to the Death of our Saviour, ſhould omit to record this remarkable and moſt illuſtrious Miracle of *Lazarus*? They could not forget it, nor be ignorant of it, if the Story had been really true: and to aſſign any other

other Reaſon than Ignorance or Fogetfulneſs, is hard and impoſſible. To aggrandize the Fame of their Maſter, for a Worker of Miracles, was the Deſign of all the *Evangeliſts*, eſpecially of the three firſt, who may be preſumed to make a Report of the greateſt, if not of all, that *Jeſus* wrought: But that there ſhould come after them an *Evangeliſt* with an huge and ſuperlatively great Miracle, and meet with Credit for it, is againſt all Senſe and Reaſon; neither is there any Story, ſo diſorderly told, in all Hiſtory, that *Critics* will admit of the Belief of. The firſt Writer of the Life of an *Hero*, to be ſure makes mention of all the grand Occurrences of it, and leaves no Room for *Biographers* afterwards, but to enlarge and paraphraſe upon what he has written, with ſome other Circumſtances and Additions of leſs Moment. If a third or a fourth *Biographer* after him ſhall preſume to add a more illuſtrious Tranſaction of the *Hero*'s Life, it will be rejected as Fable and Romance, tho' for no other Reaſon than this, that the firſt Writer muſt have been appris'd of it, and would have inſerted its Story, if there had been any Truth in it. And whether St. *John*'s Story of *Lazarus*'s Reſurrection, that Miracle of Miracles, ought not to be ſubjected to the like Criticiſm upon it,

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Chriſtians may conſider, and *Infidels* will judge.

What then was the Reaſon, I ask again, that the three firſt *Evangeliſts* neglected to record this renown'd Miracle of *Lazarus?* And why too (may I enquire here) did not *Matthew* and *Mark* mention the Story of the Widow of *Naim*'s Son, as they could not but know of it, if true, more certainly than *Luke*, the Companion of *Paul*, who alone has made a Report of it? *Grotius* ſays, (9) *it may ſeem ſtrange that this illuſtrious Miracle of the Widow's Son* was omitted by *Matthew* and *Mark:* And what is the Reaſon that *Grotius* gives for this ſtrange Omiſſion? Why, he tells us (10), *that theſe two Evangeliſts were content with one miraculous Inſtance of this Kind, by which Chriſtians might judge of* Jeſus's *Power in others alſo.* And is this Reaſon ſufficient? True it is, they were content with one Inſtance; but if they had made a Report of two or three more of the ſame ſort, no body would have thought their Hiſtory of *Chriſt* overcharg'd with impertinent and tautological Repeti-

(9) Mirum videri poteſt Hiſtoriam hanc tam illuſtrem a *Matthæo* et *Marco* omiſſam. *In Loc. Luc.*

(10) Sed videtur mihi horum uterq; contentus fuiſſe uno Exemplo redditæ Vitæ in Jairi filia ex quo ſimilia alia poſſunt intelligi. *In Loc. Luc.*

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tions. But one Instance of a Person rais'd from the dead, they were, says *Grotius*, content with: And I'll grant one to be sufficient: But which then should they, as wise and considerate *Historians* have made Choice of, the greatest or the least Miracle? The greatest, to be sure, and that was of *Lazarus*, or of the Widow's Son, if they knew of either. But instead of either of these, they tell us the Story of *Jairus*'s Daughter, that is (11) an imperfect, and disputable Miracle, in Comparison of the other Two, which consequently they know nothing at all of, or they would have preferr'd the Report of them.

If *Matthew*, the first Writer, had recorded only the Story of *Lazarus*, whose Resurrection was the greatest Miracle; and if *Luke* had added *that* of the Widow of *Naim*'s Son; and *John* lastly had remembred us of *Jarius*'s Daughter, which the other *Evangelists*, not through Ignorance or Forgetfulness, but studying Brevity, had omitted, then all had been well; and no Objection had hence lain against the Credit of any of these Miracles, or against the Authority of the *Evangelists*: But this unnatural and pre-

(11) Nondum perfecta Mors est in Puella. *St. August.* in Serm. xcviii.

poſterous Order of Time, in which theſe Miracles are recorded (the greateſt being poſtponed to the leaſt) adminiſters juſt Occaſion of ſuſpicion of the Truth and Credibility of all their Stories. And it is lucky for Chriſtianity, that *Jews* and *Infidels* have not hitherto hit upon the *Abſurdity* of this prepoſterous Narration, or they might have form'd a cogent Objection againſt theſe Miracles thus, ſaying.

" *Jeſus*, it is manifeſt, rais'd not the " dead at all. The only Perſon, that " Chriſtians can reaſonably pretend, he " did raiſe, was *Jairus*'s Daughter, whom " *Matthew* writes of; and ſhe, according " to the Story, was only in a Sleep, or an " Extacy, when *Jeſus* revived her. But " the *Galileans*, who were after a Time " call'd *Chriſtians*, finding their Account " in a Reſurrection-Miracle; *Luke*, for " the further Advantage of the Cauſe, de- " viſed another Story of better Circum- " ſtances, in the Widow of *Naim*'s Son: " But this not being ſo great a Miracle, as " the Church ſtill wanted; *John*, when " no body was alive to contradict and ex- " poſtulate with him for it, trumps up a " long Story of a thumping Miracle, in " *Jeſus*'s raiſing of *Lazarus*, who had " been not only dead, but buried ſo long

" that

" that he ſtank again. But to prove the
" Story of this Miracle to be falſe and fa-
" bulous, we need ſay no more than that
" it was laſt recorded. If there had been
" any Truth in it, the firſt *Evangeliſt*
" would have remember'd us of it.

" We don't ſuppoſe, that you Chriſtians,
" becauſe of your Prejudices, will ſub-
" ſcribe to this Account, that we thus
" give of the Riſe of theſe Miracles: But
" this is certain, that if theſe three Mira-
" cles had not been reported of *Jeſus*,
" but of *Mahomet*, in the ſame diſorder of
" Time, by three different Hiſtorians,
" you would preſently have ſcented the
" Forgery and Impoſture: You would
" juſtly have affirm'd that the three Stories
" were apparently three Fables and Falſ-
" hoods; and that the three Hiſtorians
" viſibly ſtrove to outſtretch each other:
" That the *firſt* was ſparing and modeſt in
" his Romance; and the *ſecond*, being ſen-
" ſible of the Inſufficiency of the former's
" Tale, deviſes a Miracle of a bigger
" ſize; which ſtill not proving ſufficient to
" the End propoſed; the *third* Writer,
" rather than his Prophet's Honour ſhould
" ſink for want of a Reſurrection-Miracle,
" forges a Story of a monſtrouſly huge
" one; againſt which it is, and always will
" be Objection enough, that it was not

" related by the firſt Hiſtorian. So would " you Chriſtians argue againſt theſe three " Miracles in another Impoſtor's Caſe ; " and there is not a judicious *Critic* in the " Univerſe, that would not approve of " the Argument, and applaud the Force " of it, tho you will not endure the " Thoughts of it in the Caſe of your " *Jeſus*.

" But to come nearer home to you ; " ſuppoſing *John* (who was then above a " Hundred, and in his Dotage) had not " reported this Miracle of *Lazarus* ; but " that *Clement* (joining it with his (12) in- " credible Story of the Reſurrection of a " *Phœnix*) or *Ignatius*, or *Polycarp*, or the " Author of the *Apoſtolical Conſtitutions* " had related it ; would not your Chri- " ſtian *Critics* have been at Work to ex- " plode it? There is not an ancient extra- " evangelical Tradition of any Note about " *Jeſus*, that ſome or other of your *Cri-* " *tics* have not boggled at ; but ſuch a " Story as this of *Lazarus* would have " been received by none. I queſtion, " whether Mr. *Whiſton* would not have " rejected the *Conſtitutions* upon ſuch a " Story in them ; or if his Fancy for ſome " other Things in them had overcome his

(12) In Epiſt. prima ad Corinth. Cap. xxv.

" Reaſon

" Reaſon againſt this; yet *Biſhop Smal-*
" *broke*, who has written againſt the Ca-
" nonicalneſs of the *Conſtitutions*, with
" his judicious Animadverſions upon this
" Story, would abſolutely have over-
" thrown their Authority. And what
" would he have ſaid here? Not only
" that the Miracle ſmells rankly of Forge-
" ry and Fraud, or the *Evangeliſts*, eſpeci-
" ally *Matthew*, had never forgotten to
" record it; but he would have reminded
" us of intrinſic Notes (*hereafter to be men-*
" *tion'd*) of Abſurdity, and Incredibility,
" that would for ever have caſhier'd the
" Belief of it. And whether we *Infidels*
" ought not to take the ſame Liberty to
" criticiſe on *John*'s Goſpel, which you
" do on your Apoſtolical Fathers, who
" wrote before him, let the impartial and
" unprejudiced, judge: If in juſtice we
" ought to take it; we are ſure we could
" give two or three notable Reaſons (but
" that We will not now put Chriſtians
" out of Temper with them) why *John*
" may be ſuſpected of a Miſtake or Fraud
" in this Miracle, rather than any other
" Chriſtian Writer of the *firſt* or *ſecond*
" Century."

To ſuch an unhappy Objection, ariſing from the unnatural and prepoſterous Order of Time, in which they are recorded,

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are these three Miracles before us obnoxious. And I am thinking how Ministers of the Letter will be able to get over it. As for my self, who am for the mystical Interpretation of these Miracles, I have a solid and substantial Answer at hand to the foresaid Objection, an Answer that curiously accounts for the Order of Time in which the Miracles are related; but my Answer will not please our *Divines*, nor stand them in any stead; therefore they must look up another good one of their own, that will comport with the *Letter*; or the said Objection, improved with another presently against *Lazarus*'s Resurrection, will be too hard, not for Christianity it self, but for their Ministry.

Grotius, being aware of the foresaid Objection, has given us such a (13) Solution of it as then occurr'd to his Thoughts. Dr. *Whitby*, not being satisfied with *Gro-*

(13) Quæri solet, cur hanc tam nobilem Historiam priores Evangelii scriptores non attigerint. Mihi hoc succurrit, cum illi scriberent, vixisse resuscitatum Lazarum, & periculum ei fuisse a judæis, si quod illi acciderat, palam vulgaretur. Nam etiam mox narratur C. xii. 10, ob hoc ipsum structas ei insidias. Quare visum illis hoc ad tempus subticeri posse, cum alia Exempla resuscitatorum suppeterent. At mortuo Lazaro, cum jam nemini Periculum ex rei Narratione fieri posset, additum hoc a Johanne in hac quasi prætermissorum Collectione. *In Loc. Johan.*

tius's

tius's Solution, has given us (14) another: But how weak and insufficient both their Solutions are, I will not spare Time to consider, till some *Writer* shall appear in Defence of the Sufficiency and Strength of one or other of them. And so I pass to a

2. Second Observation, by Way of Objection to the *Letter* of these Miracles, and that is, by enquiring, what became of these three Persons after their Resurrection? How long did they live afterwards? And of what Use and Advantage were their restored Lives to the Church or to Mankind? The Evangelical and Ecclesiastical History is entirely silent as to these Questions, which is enough to make us suspect their Stories to be merely romantick or parabolical; and that there were no such Persons rais'd from the dead; or we must have heard somewhat of their Station and

(14) *The last of the three* Evangelists *writing but fifteen Years after our Lord's Ascension, might think it needless to mention a Miracle concerning a Person, living so near* Jerusalem, *where there was so great a Fame thereof, and so many living Witnesses. St.* John, *writing his Gospel, say the Ancients, above sixty Years after our Lord's Ascension, when by the Death of the Person, and most of the Witnesses that were present at his Resurrection, the Memory and Fame of it might be much impair'd, had great Reason to perpetuate the Memory of it, by this large Rehearsal of it.* In Loc. Johan.

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Converſation in the World afterwards. It's true, that *Epiphanius* (15) ſays, what he found among Traditions, that *Lazarus* lived thirty Years after his Reſurrection: But how did he ſpend his Time all that while? Was it to the Honour of *Jeſus*, to the Service of the Church, and Propogation of the Goſpel? Of that we know nothing; tho in Reaſon and Gratitude to *Jeſus*, his Benefactor, it ought to have been ſo ſpent; and if it had been ſo employ'd, Hiſtory ſurely would have inform'd us of it. According to the Opinion of *Grotius*, in a Citation above, *Lazarus* for the reſt of his reſtored Life abſconded, and skulk'd about the Country for Fear of the *Jews*, who lay in Wait for him; which is a Suggeſtion, not only diſhonourable to *Jeſus*, as if the ſame Power, that rais'd him from the dead, could not protect him againſt his Enemies; but reproachful to *Lazarus* himſelf, who ſhould have choſen to ſuffer Death again, rather than not bear an open Teſtimony to *Jeſus*, the Author of his Reſurrection. However it was, we hear no more of *Lazarus*, than that he lived thirty Years afterwards, which Tra-

(15) Quin & illud inter traditiones reperimus triginta tum Annos natum fuiſſe Lazarum, cum a mortuis excitatus eſt; atq; idem ille poſtea triginta aliis annis vixit. *In Hæreſ.* lxvi. §. 34.

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dition, without other Memorials of his Life, brings the Miracle more under ſuſpicion of Fable, than if he had dy'd ſoon after it. And of *Jairus*'s Daughter, and of the Widow of *Naim*'s Son, which is aſtoniſhing, we read nothing at all. Does not this Silence in Hiſtory about them, make their Miracles queſtionable, and but like *Gulliverian* Tales of Perſons and Things, that out of the Romance, never had any Being.

Jeſus did but (16) *call a little Child, and ſet him in the midſt* of his Diſciples; and that Act was remember'd in the Piety and Zeal (17) of *Ignatius*, who made a renown'd Biſhop. But the Favour and Bleſſing conferr'd on theſe three rais'd Perſons was exceedingly greater; and one might have expected, that *Lazarus* and the Widow's Son would have been eminent Miniſters of the Goſpel. But inſtead of that, their Lives afterwards were paſs'd in Obſcurity, or, what's as bad, Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory has neglected a Report of them. What can any one hereupon think leſs, than that the Favour of the Miracles was loſt on undeſerving Perſons, which I abhor the Thoughts of; or that their Stories

(16) Matt. xviii. 2.
(17) In Nicephor. Calliſt. Eccl. Hiſt. L. ii. c. 35.

are but Parables, which I rather incline to.

Miniſters of the *Letter* may here ſay, "That the Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory of the A-"poſtolical Age is very ſcanty; and that "many Memorials of other Perſons and "Tranſactions are loſt and buried in Ob-"livion: Which unhappy Fate has at-"tended the after-Lives and Actions of "theſe rais'd Perſons, or undoubtedly we "ſhould have had a famous Record of "them." This is not impoſſible; tho' in the Wiſdom of Providence it is hardly probable, but that ſome more Remembrance muſt have been left of one or other, if not of all the three Perſons; in as much as ſuch a Remembrance of them would now-a-days have no leſs gain'd a Beleif of the Miracles, than this Hiſtorical Silence tends to the Diſcredit of them.

It's ſomewhat ſtrange, that we hear no more of the after-Fame and Life of any of the diſeaſed Perſons, whom *Jeſus* miraculouſly cured; excepting of the Woman, heal'd of an Iſſue of Blood; who, tho' ſhe *ſpent* ALL *ſhe had, even* ALL *her Living* upon *Phyſicians*; yet out of the Remains of it erected, ſays (18) *Euſebius*, at *Cæſarea Philippi*, two moſt coſtly Statues of Braſs, to the Memory of

(18 In Eccl. Hiſt. L. vii. c. 18.

Jeſus

Jesus and of herself, and of the Miracle wrought by him: Which Dr. *Whitby* (19) as if he was tainted with Infidelity, endeavours to make an idle Tale of. But excepting, I say, this Story of this Woman, we hear nothing of any other heal'd Person; which is Matter of some Speculation: But that the Persons rais'd from the dead should not at all be mention'd in History for their Labours and Lives afterwards to the Honour of *Jesus*, is absolutely unaccountable. Whether such a profound Silence in History about them be not shocking of the Credit of the Miracles, let our *Divines* consider. I am of Opinion that if *Jesus* really rais'd these Persons from the dead; this and no other Reason, in the Providence of God, can be given for the Silence of Ecclesiastical History about them afterwards, than to make *dead-letter'd* Stories of their Miracles, in order to turn our Heads entirely to the Consideration of their mystical Signification, without which the *Letter*, for the Argument before us, is deserving of no Regard nor Credit. But

3. By way of Objection to the *Letter* of these three Miracles, let us consider the

(19) In Loc. Matthæi.

Condition of the Persons rais'd from the dead; and whether they were at all proper Persons for *Jesus* to work such a Miracle upon, in Testimony of his divine Power. If they were improper Persons according to the *Letter*, it's not credible that He, who was the Wisdom of God, would raise them; or if he did, it was because they were the propereſt to make mystical Emblems of their Stories.

That *Jesus* ought to have rais'd all that dy'd, where-ever he came, during the Time of his Ministry, none, I presume, can hold. Two or three Instances of his almighty and miraculous Power of this Kind will be allow'd to be sufficient: But then they must be wisely and judiciously made Choice of, out of a vast Number of Persons, that must needs dye in that Time. Where then was his Wisdom and Prudence to chuse these three Persons above others to that Honour? Why were all of them, or indeed any one of them preferr'd to other Persons of a different Age and Condition in the World? Nay, if the *Letter* of their Stories is only to be regarded, were not all these three Persons almost the improperest and most unfit of any for *Jesus* to exercise that Power on?

Jarius's

Jairus's Daughter was an insignificant *Girl* of twelve Years old: And there could be no Reason for raising her, but to wipe Sorrow from the Hearts, and Tears from the Eyes of her Parents, who ought to have been better Philosophers, than immoderately to grieve for her. And was here a good Reason for *Jesus* to interpose with his Almighty Power? No certainly; a Lecture of Patience and Resignation in this Case had been enough. And tho' *Jesus* could raise her from the dead; yet for as much as that Favour was to be conferr'd but on a few; and his Miracles ought to be useful as well as conspicuous, she should have been pass'd by, as an improper Object of his Power, in Comparison of many others, presently to be named. If therefore a better Reason, than what's discernible in the *Letter*, is not to be fetch'd from the Mystery; I can't suppose that *Jesus*, the Wisdom of God would raise this *Girl*; but that the modern Belief of her Resuscitation, exclusive of the mystical Signification, is, as shall be by and by argued, altogether groundless.

The Widow of *Naim*'s Son too was but a νεανισκος *Youth*, and whether any thing older than the *Girl* above is doubtful; but his Life certainly was of no more Importance to the World after, than be-

before his Reſurrection. And why was he then one of the *three* to be rais'd from the dead? Why had he this Honour done him, before others of greater Age, Worth, and Uſe to Mankind? Some will ſay, for the Comfort of his ſorrowful Mother. And is this Reaſon ſufficient? A Diſcourſe on the Pleaſures of *Abraham*'s Boſom, where ſhe would e'er long met her Son, had been enough to chear her Heart. If therefore the Fathers don't help me to a ſolid myſtical Reaſon, why the Son and *only Son* of a Widow was to be rais'd by *Jeſus*, as thy were carrying him to his Burial, I'll not beleive He would raiſe this dead *Boy* rather than many others, for the Manifeſtation of his Power; but that the Story of his Reſurrection, as ſhall ſoon be reaſonably proved, was all Sham and Cheat.

Lazarus indeed was *Jeſus*'s Friend, whom he Loved; and as I will not queſtion but *Jeſus*'s Affection was wiſely and deſervedly placed on him; ſo here, to Appearance, was a better Reaſon for the raiſing of him, than of either of the other Two. But even this Reaſon, ſuppoſing *Jeſus* was to raiſe but three Perſons, is not ſufficient againſt the Caſes of many others, that may be put for the Manifeſtation of his Power, for the Illuſtration of his Wiſdom and Goodneſs, and for the Con-

Converſion of Unbelievers: Conſequently, if this Story of *Lazarus* bo not parabolical, the litteral Fact is diſputable, and obnoxious to ſuch Exceptions preſently to be obſerved againſt it, as will not be eaſily got over.

Jeſus rais'd the dead, and wrought other Miracles, ſay our *Divines* often, not only to manifeſt his own Power and Glory, but his Love to Mankind, and his Inclination to do them good: For which Reaſon his Miracles are uſeful and beneficial as well as ſtupendous and ſupernatural Acts, on purpoſe to conciliate Men's Affections as well as their Faith to him. On this Topick our *Divines* are copious and rhetorical, when they write on *Jeſus*'s Miracles, as if no more uſeful and wonderful Works could be done, than what he did. And I do agree with them, that (what Reaſon beſpeaks) the Miracles of a pretended Author of Religion ought to be both as uſeful and great as well as could be. But ſuch were not *Jeſus*'s Miracles according to *Letter*, and leaſt of all his Acts of raiſing the dead. For if we conſider the Perſons rais'd by him, we ſhall find, he could hardly have exerted his Power on any of leſs Importance to the World, both before and after their Reſurrection. A young *Girl* indeed is fitter to be rais'd

than

than a decrepid old Woman, who by the Courſe of Nature was to return to Corruption again, as ſoon as reſtored to Life: And a *Boy* rather than an infirm old Man for the ſame Reaſon: And *Lazarus* the Friend of *Jeſus*, perhaps, and but perhaps, rather than his profeſs'd Enemy. But what are theſe three Perſons in Compariſon of many others of other Circumſtances? Inſtead of a *Boy* and a *Girl* and even of *Lazarus*, who were all of no Conſequence to the Publick, either before or ſince; I ſhould think *Jeſus* ought to have rais'd an uſeful Magiſtrate, whoſe Life had been a common Bleſſing; an induſtrious Merchant, whoſe Death was a publick Loſs; a Father of a numerous Family, which for a comfortable Subſiſtance depended on him. Such dead Objects of *Jeſus*'s Power and Compaſſion could not but offer themſelves, during the Time of his Miniſtry, and if he meant to be as uſeful as he could, in his Miracles, he would have laid hold on them. If a few Perſons only were to be rais'd from the dead, the foreſaid were the propereſt, whoſe Reſurrection and Return to Life would have begotten the Applauſe as well as the Wonder of the World; would moſt extenſively have ſpread *Jeſus*'s Fame; and would have gain'd him the Love and

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Diſcipleſhip of all that heard of his being ſo great a Benefactor to Mankind. Such Inſtances of his Power would have demonſtrated him to be a moſt benign as well as a mighty Agent; and none in Intereſt or Prejudice could have open'd their Mouths againſt him, eſpecially if the Perſons rais'd from the dead were ſelected upon the Recommendation of the People of this or that City. But that an inſignicant *Boy* and a *Girl*, (forſooth!) and the obſcure *Lazarus*, are preferr'd by *Jeſus*, to ſuch publick and more deſerving Perſons is unaccountable. Their Story therefore, upon this Argument, ſavours of Romance and Fraud; and unleſs the *Myſtery* help us to, what the *Letter* can't, a good Reaſon for *Jeſus*'s Conduct here, the Miracles may be hence juſtly queſtion'd, and the Credibility of their Report diſputed.

But now I am ſpeaking of the Fitneſs and Unfitneſs of deceaſed Perſons to have this grand Miracle wrought on them; it comes into my Head to ask, why *Jeſus* rais'd not *John* the Baptiſt to Life again? A Perſon of greater Merits, and more worthy of the Favour of *Jeſus* and of this Miracle, could not be. If *Jeſus* could raiſe any from the dead, he would ſurely have raiſed him; and why did he not? This is a reaſonable Queſtion, and an

Anſwer ſhould be thought on for it. Was it a Thing out of *Jeſus*'s Power? Not ſo; He was Omnipotent, and could by Force or Perſuaſion have reſcued *John*'s Head out of the Hands of his Enemies; and the tacking it again to his Body, and the infuſing new Life into him was no more difficult to *Jeſus*, than the Reſuſcitation of a ſtinking Carcaſs. If *Jeſus* had here exerted his Power, and rais'd his deareſt Friend and choiceſt Miniſter for the Preparation, if not Propagation of the Goſpel, none could queſtion his Ability to raiſe any others, tho' he had rais'd no more. But in as much as *John* the *Baptiſt*, one of his ſingular Merits and Services to *Chriſt*, was overlook'd and neglected by him; and three uſeleſs and inſignificant Perſons had this Honour done them, the Facts may reaſonably be called into queſtion, and, if the Myſteries don't ſolve the Difficulty, their litteral Stories may hence be accounted fooliſh, fictitious and fabulous; eſpecially if we conſider,

4. That none of theſe three rais'd Perſons had been long enough dead to amputate all Doubt of *Jeſus*'s miraculous Power in their Reſurrection. As to *Jairus*'s Daughter, ſhe was but newly expired, if at all dead, when *Jeſus* brought her to Life

Life again. *Jesus* himself says, she was but asleep. And according to *Theophanes Cerameus* (20), and *Theophylact* (21) there is Room to suspect that this *Girl* was only καλαχῶ *beside herself.* And it is not impossible, but the passionate Skreams of the Feminine by-standers might fright her into Fits, that bore the Appearance of Death; otherwise why did *Jesus* turn these inordinate Weepers out of the House, before he could bring her to her Senses again? And why did he tell her Parents, that she was only in asleep, but to comfort them with the Possibility of his awakening her out of it? Is not this destructive of the Miracle, and making no more of it, than what another Man might do? And is there not some Probability, that here's all of this Story? But supposing she was really dead, yet for the sake of an indisputable Miracle in her Resurrection, it must be granted, that she ought to have been much longer, some Days if not Weeks, dead and buried.

As to the Widow of *Naim*'s Son, there was somewhat more of the Appearance of Death in him, than in *Jairus*'s Daughter. He was carried forth to his Burial, and so may be presumed to be really a dead

(20) Puellam ex illo Tumultu plangentium stupore correptam esse, non vero defunctam. *In Homil. de Jairi filia.*

(21) In Loc. Matthæ.

Corpſe. But might not here be Fraud or Miſtake in the Caſe? Hiſtory and common Fame affords Inſtances of the miſtaken Deaths of Perſons, who ſometimes have been unfortunately buried alive, and at other Times happily, by one means or other, reſtored to Life: And who knows but *Jeſus*, upon ſome Information or other, might ſuſpect this Youth to be in a lethargick State, and had a Mind to try, if by chafeing, *&c.* he could not do, what ſucceſsfully he did, bring him to his Senſes again: Or might not a Piece of Fraud be here concerted between *Jeſus*, a ſubtil Youth, and his Mother and others; and all the Formalities of a Death and Burial contrived, that *Jeſus*, whoſe Fame for a Worker of Miracles was to be rais'd, might here have an Opportunity to make a ſhew of a grand one. The Mourning of the Widow, who had her Tears at Command, and *Jeſus*'s caſual meeting of the Corpſe upon the Road, looks like Contrivance to put the better Face upon the Matter. God forbid, that I ſhould ſuſpect, there was any Fraud of this Kind here; but of the Poſſibility of it, none can doubt. And where there is a Poſſibility of Fraud, it is Nonſence, and mere Credulity to talk of a real, certain and ſtupendous Miracle, eſpecially where the

the Juggler and pretended Worker of Miracles has been detected in ſome of his other Tricks. All that I have to ſay here to this Matter, is, that if *Jeſus* had a Mind to raiſe the Son of this Widow, in Teſtimony of his divine Power, he ſhould have ſuffer'd him to have been buried two or three Weeks firſt; otherwiſe, if the Myſtery don't account for *Jeſus*'s ſtopping the Bearers of the Corpſe upon the Road, here is too much Room for ſuſpicion of Cheat in the Letter of the Story.

Lazarus's Caſe ſeems to be the leſs exceptionable of three. He had been buried *four Days*, and ſuppoſed to be putrified in the Opinion of his Siſter *Mary*, and of modern Chriſtians: And if ſo, his Reſuſcitation was a moſt grand and indiſputable Miracle. And I could have wiſh'd, if I had not loved the Myſtery rather than the Letter, that no Cavil and Exception could have been made to it. Whether *Lazarus*, who was *Jeſus*'s Friend and beloved Diſciple, would not come into Meaſures with his Lord, for the Defence of his Honour, and Propagation of his Fame, *Infidels*, who take Chriſtianity for an Impoſture, will not queſtion: And whether he would not conſent to be interr'd alive, in a hollow Cave, where there was only a Stone laid at the Mouth of it, as long as

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a Man could faſt, none of them will doubt. Four Days was almoſt too long for a Man to faſt without danger of Health; but if thoſe *four Days* are number'd according to the Arithmetick of Jeſus's *three Days* in his Grave, they are reducible to two Days and three Nights, which Time, if no Victuals were ſecretly convey'd with him, a Man might faſt in *Lazarus*'s Cave. As to the *ſtinking* of *Lazarus*'s Carcaſs; that, *Infidels* will ſay, was but the Aſſertion of his Siſter beforehand like a Prologue to a Farce. None of the Spectators at his Reſurrection ſay one Word of his ſtinking. And as to the Weepings and Lamentations of *Jeſus* and of *Lazarus*'s Siſters, they will ſay that was all Sham and Counterfeit, the better to carry on the Juggle of a feign'd Reſurrection. And what's worſt of all, they will ſay, that tho' *Jeſus* did call *Lazarus* forth with a *loud Voice*, as if he had been as deaf as a dead Man; yet his *Face was bound about with a Napkin*, ſo that the Spectators could not diſcern what was of the Eſſence of the Miracle, the Change of his Countenance from a dead to a live one, which is a plain Sign, that it was all Fraud and Impoſture.

God forbid, that I ſhould have the ſame ſenſe with *Infidels*, of this Matter; but to be juſt to their Suggeſtions and Imaginations

tions here, I muſt needs ſay, there are ſome other unhappy Circumſtances, preſently to be conſider'd, in this Story, which, if they are not emblematical, make it the moſt notorious Cheat and Impoſture that ever was put upon Mankind. In the mean Time, from what is here argued, it is plain, that *Lazarus* was not ſo long dead and buried, as that there is no Room to doubt of the Miracle of his Reſurrection.

Now whether theſe Arguments againſt theſe three Miracles, drawn from the Shortneſs of the Time, in which theſe Perſons lay for dead, have any Force in them, let our *Divines* conſider. If nothing of all this is in their Opinion affecting of the Credit of the Miracles; yet they muſt allow that *Jeſus*, if he could raiſe the dead, might have made Choice of other Inſtances of Perſons, more unqueſtionably dead, who had lain longer in their Graves, and were in a viſible State of Putrefaction. And if this grand Miracle of raiſing the dead was to be wrought by *Jeſus* for the Manifeſtation of his Glory, and in Teſtimony of his Authority; he ſhould have exerciſed his Power on ſome ſuch Perſons, nominated by the Magiſtrates of this or that City, who with the People ſhould be preſent at the miraculous Operation, beholding the putrefied Bodies,

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(without a Napkin before their Faces) and how they were ſuddenly enliven'd and invigorated with new Fleſh, after the Similitude of their priſtine Form, when in Health and full Strength. Becauſe that *Jeſus* rais'd not ſome ſuch Perſons to Life, I muſt take the Stories of the three Miracles before us to be but typical of more myſterious Works; or beleive them for the Arguments above to be downright Cheats and Fables. And what is enough to induce a modern *Divine* to this Opinion. Is

5. The Conſideration, that none of theſe rais'd Perſons did or could, after the Return of their Souls to their Bodies, tell any Tales of their ſeparate Exiſtence; otherwiſe the Evangeliſts had not been ſilent in this main Point, which is of the Eſſence of Chriſtianity. Are not our *Divines* here reduced to an unhappy *Dilemma*, either to deny the ſeparate Exiſtence of the Soul, or the precedent Deaths of theſe rais'd Perſons? As Chriſtians, we profeſs to believe both, which ſeemingly are incompatible; or the Evangeliſts had made ſuch a Relation, as their return'd Souls had given of the other World. Was any Perſon, in this Age, to be rais'd to Life, that had been any time dead; the firſt Thing

that

that his Friends and Acquaintance would enquire of him, would be to know, where his Soul had been; in what Company; and how it had fared with him; and Hiſtorians would certainly record his Narrative. The ſame Curioſity could not but poſſeſs People of old, when theſe Miracles were wrought, and if the rais'd Perſons had told any Stories of their ſeparate Exiſtance, the Evangeliſts no leſs unqueſtionally would have reported them; in as much as ſuch a Report would have been, not only a Confirmation of that Doctrine, which is of the Eſſence of our Religion; but an abſolute Confutation of the *Sadducees* and *Sceptiſts* of that Age, and of the *Materialiſts* of this. But this their Silence in this Caſe is of bad Conſequence either to the Doctrine of the Soul's Exiſtence in Separation from the Body, or to theſe Miracles themſelves, ſince we muſt hereupon almoſt neceſſarily hold, that theſe rais'd Perſons were not at all dead, or that their Souls dy'd with them.

The Author of a Sermon, aſcrib'd to St. *Auguſtin* tells us (22) that *Lazarus* after.

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(22) Atque ut miraculum divinæ Virtutis accreſceret, dum Convivis interrogantibus triſtia Loca pœnarum, ſedeſq; alta nocte ſemper obſcuras, Lazarus indicat diligenti narratione per ordinem. Diu quæſiti

ter his Resurrection made a large Report of *Hell*, where he had been: but as this is a mere Fiction of that Author, without the least Authority from Scripture; so I presume it will be accounted a *Blunder* in him, to suppose the Soul of *Lazarus*, the Friend and beloved of *Jesus*, was in Hell. The Soul of *Jesus* indeed, for Reasons best known to himself, upon his Death, descended into Hell, when some think he should rather have gone with the penitent Thief into Paradise. But the Thoughts, that any of *Jesus*'s Friends should go to Hell, I suppose will not be born with; or what will become of the Preachers of this Age, who would be accounted Men of that Denomination, And if *Lazarus*'s Soul had been in Paradise, it was hardly a good Work in *Jesus* to recall it, for thirty Years afterwards, to the Miseries and Troubles of this wicked World. I wish therefore our Divines could determine, where *Lazarus*'s Soul was for the four Days of his Burial; because I can't possibly conceive any thing else, than that he was not really dead, or that his Soul dy'd with him, or went to a bad place, otherwise after his Resurrection he had never

quæsiti longisq; temporibus ignoranti invenerunt tandem Inferi Proditorem. *In Serm.* cxvi. *Append. St. August.*

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abſconded for fear of the *Jews*, as if he was unwilling to die again, and return to the Place from whence he came.

But however it was with the Souls of theſe rais'd Perſons before their Re-union to their Bodies, here is another Difficulty and Objection againſt theſe Miracles; and how will our Divines get over it? Perhaps they may ſay, that tho' theſe rais'd Perſons were before really dead; yet their Souls were not as yet gone to their Places prepared of God for them, but continued hovering about their Bodies, like the Flame about the Snuff of a Candle, with deſires

——— *iterumq; reverti*
Corpora———

to be again rejoin'd to them. And with-all my Heart let this Anſwer paſs, if our *Divines* and *Infidels* can ſo agree upon it. As for my own Opinion, it is this, that theſe Miracles of *Jeſus* are Parables, and that it was beſide the Purpoſe of the Parable, and of the *Evangeliſts* to ſay any thing of the Place and the State of the Soul upon its ſeparation from the Body; otherwiſe the Letter of their Stories is manifeſtly obnoxious to the Objection above, or the Deaths of theſe pretended rais'd Perſons, upon Chriſtian Principles, are queſtionable. But

6. And laſtly, Let us conſider the intrinſick Abſurdities and Incredibilities of the ſeveral Stories of theſe three Miracles. And ſuch Abſurdities ſhall we find in them, that, if they had been intended as Teſtimonies of *Jeſus*'s divine Power, had never been inſerted in their Narratives.

As to *Jairus*'s Daughter, and her Reſurrection from the dead, St. *Hilary* (23) hints, that there was no ſuch Perſon as *Jairus* whoſe Name was fictitious, and coin'd with a ſpiritual Signification for the Uſe of the Parable; and he gives this Reaſon, and a good Reaſon it is, why he thought ſo, becauſe it is elſewhere (24) intimated in the Goſpel, that none of the Rulers of the Synagogues confeſſedly believed on *Jeſus*. Is not here then a ſtumbling-Block at the Threſhold of the Letter of this Story? But why did *Jeſus* ſay, this Girl was but in a Sleep? If he was going to work a Miracle in her Reſuſcitation, he ſhould not have call'd Death,

(23) Princeps hic, Lex eſſe intelligitur, quæ Dominum orat pro Plebe, quam ipſa Chriſto prædicata ejus Adventus Expectatione nutriverat, ut Vitam mortuæ reddat. Nam nullum Principem credidiſſe legimus, ex quo Perſona hujus principis orantis merito in Typum aptabitur. *In Loc. Matt.*

(24) John vii. 48. and xii, 42.

Sleep;

Sleep ; but if others had been of a contrary Opinion, he ſhould firſt have convinced them of the certainty of her Death, before he did the great Work on her. And why did he charge the Parents of the Girl, not to ſpeak of the Miracle ? If he meant it as a Teſtimony of his divine Power, he ſhould rather have exhorted them, in juſtice to himſelf to publiſh it, and make it well known. And why, as St. *Ambroſe* (25) puts the Queſtion, did he turn the People out of the Houſe, before he would raiſe her ? The more Witneſſes are preſent at a Miracle, the better it is atteſted, and the more readily believed by others ; and who ſhould be preſent at the Miracle rather than thoſe who were incredulous of his divine Power ? Are not all theſe Circumſtances, ſo many *Abſurdities*, which, if they are not to be accounted for in the Myſtery, are ſo far deſtructive of the Letter, as that it is Nonſenſe and Folly in our *Divines* to talk of a Miracle here, againſt *Jeſus*'s expreſs Word and Prohibition to the contrary.

As to the Story of the Widow of *Naim*'s Son, excepting what is before obſerved of

(25) Quæ tamen tantæ diverſitatis Cauſa ? Supra publice Viduæ filius ſuſcitatur, hic removentur plures arbitri. *In Loc. Luc.*

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the ſhortneſs of the Time, in which he lay dead, and of the Unfitneſs of his Perſon to be rais'd before an Husband and Father of a Family, to the Comfort of his Wife and Children, (which are enough to overthrow the Credility of the Miracle) I have here no more Fault to find in the Letter of it.

But the long Story of *Lazarus* is ſo brimful of Abſurdities, that, if the Letter alone is to be regarded; St. *John*, who was then above a hundred, when he wrote it, had liv'd beyond his Reaſon and Senſes, or he could not have committed them.

I have not room here to make Remarks on all theſe Abſurdities, which would be the Work of a Volume; but ſhall ſingle out three or four of them at preſent, reſerving the reſt for another Opportunity, when the whole Story of this Miracle will appear to be ſuch a Contexture of Folly and Fraud in its Contrivance, Execution, and Relation, as is not to be equall'd in all Romantick Hiſtory; and our *Divines* will find themſelves ſo diſtreſs'd upon the Diſſection and Diſplay of it, as that they muſt of Neceſſity allow this Story to be but a Parable; or, what's moſt grievous to think on, give up their Religion upon it.

Firſt,

First then, obſerve that *Jeſus* is ſaid to have *wept* and *groan'd* for the Death of *Lazarus*: But why ſo, ſays (26) St. *Baſil*? Was not this an *Abſurdity* to weep at all for the Death of him, whom he could, and was about to recover to Life again? Another Man may as reaſonably grieve for the Abſence of his Friend, whoſe Company and Preſence he can retrieve in an Inſtant, as that *Jeſus* ſhould ſhed Tears for *Lazarus* in this Caſe. If *Jeſus* could not or would not raiſe him from the dead, he ought not, as a Philoſopher, who knows Man is born to die, to betray ſo much Weakneſs as to weep for him. Patience and Reſignation unto God upon the Death of our deareſt Friends and Relations is what all Philoſophers have rightly taught; and *Jeſus*, one ſhould think, ſhould have been the moſt Heroical Example of theſe Graces; and how came he to fail of it here? A Stoical Apathy had better became him than ſuch childiſh and effeminate Grief, which not only makes him a mean and poor-ſpirited Mortal; but is a groſs *Abſurdity* and *Incredibility* upon Conſideration of his Will and Power to fetch

(26) Qua igitur Ratione, qui tanta hæc erat facturus, id quod evenit, judicaſſet merito Lacrymis eſſe proſequendum? *In Homil. de Gratiarum Actione.*

La-

Lazarus to Life again. If there be not, according to the Fathers, Myſtery in theſe Tears of *Jeſus*, they are a fooliſh and unnatural Prelude to a Farce, he was acting in the pretended Reſuſcitation of *Lazarus*.

Some ancient Catholicks, not being appriſed of the Myſtery, were ſo offended at theſe Words, *Jeſus wept*, that as *Epiphanius* (27) ſays, they expung'd them out of their Bibles; and I wonder, they have not, before now, diſturb'd the Faith of Miniſters of the Letter, to the utter Rejection of the Miracle.

Secondly, Obſerve that *John* ſays, it was with *a loud Voice*, that *Jeſus* call'd *Lazarus* forth out of his Cave. And why, I pray, a louder Voice than ordinary? Was dead *Lazarus* deafer than *Jairus*'s Daughter, or the Widow's Son? Or was his Soul at ſo great a Diſtance from his Body, as he could not hear a ſtill and low Voice? Some ſuch ſilly Reaſon as *this* muſt be given for this *loud Voice* here; but how abſurd it is according to the Letter, Infidels will judge, till Chriſtians can aſſign a better. The dead can hear the Whiſper of the Almighty, if Power go along with it,

(27) *Lacrymatus eſt Jeſus*, quod aliquando eraſum fuiſſe a Catholicis quibuſdam ſcribit Epiphanius. Vid. *Druſium* in *Loc. Johan.*

as

as ſoon as the Sound of a Trumpet. St. *John* then ſhould not have written of a *loud Voice*, unleſs he meant to adapt his Story to the Capacities and Conceptions of the Vulgar, who have no Apprehenſions of God's Power, out of ſenſible and human Repreſentations of it.

Thirdly, Becauſe that a Miracle ſhould be well guarded againſt all ſuſpicion of Fraud, I was thinking to make it an *Abſurdity*, that the Napkin, before *Jeſus* rais'd *Lazarus*, was not taken from his Face, that the Spectators might behold his mortified Looks, and the miraculous Change of his Countenance from Death unto Life. What *Infidels* think of this Circumſtance I know not: I hope, it is not with them a Token of Fraud and Impoſture; tho' I muſt needs ſay, that if the Fathers did not let me into the Myſtery of the Napkin about *Lazarus*'s Face when *Jeſus* call'd him forth, I ſhould not myſelf like it.

Fourthly, and laſtly, Obſerve, St. *John* ſays v. 45, that *many of the Jews, who had ſeen the Things that Jeſus did* here; *beleived on him*; and *ſome of them* v. 46, who did not beleive, *went their Ways to the Phariſees and told them what Things Jeſus had done* in this pretended Miracle,

and how the Buſineſs was tranſacted: Whereupon the Chief Prieſts and Phariſees were ſo far incens'd as v. 53, *from that Day forth they took Council together to put him to Death*; and Ch. xii. 10. *conſulted, that they might put* Lazarus *alſo to Death.* Jeſus *therefore* (and his Diſciples and *Lazarus* fled for it, for they) v. 54. *walk'd no more openly among the Jews*, but *went thence into a Country, near to the Wilderneſs* (a convenient hiding Place) *and there continued with his Diſciples*; otherwiſe in all Probability they had been all ſacrificed.

I dare not argue upon theſe Circumſtances, neither would I, for the Honour of *Jeſus*, have mention'd them; but that my old Friend, the Jewiſh *Rabbi*, who help'd me to the Satirical Invective againſt *Jeſus*'s Miracle of *turning Water into Wine*, has hence form'd an Objection againſt *Lazarus*'s Reſurrection, and ſent me a *Letter* upon it, deſiring me to publiſh it, and exhort the *Clergy* to anſwer it; otherwiſe he would clandeſtinely hand it about to the Prejudice of our Religion: Whereupon I, rather than Chriſtianity ſhould ſo ſuffer, do here publiſh it, and it is as follows.

" *Sr.* When we laſt diſcours'd on *Jeſus*'s " Miracles, I promiſed to ſend you my " Thoughts on *Lazarus*'s Reſurrection, " which I look upon as a notorious Im-

" poſture,

" poſture, and for the Proof it, need go no
" farther, than to the Circumſtances of its
" Story, which your *Evangeliſts* has related.
" If there had been an indiſputable Mi-
" racle, wrought in *Lazarus*'s Reſurrecti-
" on; why were the *Cheif-Prieſts* and *Pha-*
" *riſees* ſo incens'd upon it, as *to take*
" *Council to put both Jeſus* and *Lazarus* to
" *Death for it?* Where was the Provoca-
" tion? I can conceive none. Tho' the
" *Jews* were ever ſo canker'd with Ma-
" lice and Hatred to *Jeſus* before; yet
" ſuch a moſt ſtupendous Miracle was e-
" nough to ſtop their Mouths, and turn
" their Hearts: Or if their Prejudices a-
" gainſt *Jeſus* were inſuperable, and they
" hated him but the more for the Num-
" ber and Greatneſs of his Miracles; yet
" why is poor *Lazarus*, inoffenſive *Laza-*
" *rus*, upon whom this good and great
" Work was wrought, an Object of their
" Hatred too? Your *Divines* are to give a
" credible and probable Account of this
" Matter, ſuch a one as will comport with
" Reaſon and Senſe; or we ſhall conclude,
" that it was *Fraud*, detected in this pre-
" tended Miracle, which juſtly provok'd
" the Indignation of our Anceſtors.
" To ſay, what is all you can ſay, that
" it was downright Inhumanity, Barbarity
" and Brutality in the *Jews* to hate *La-*

" *zarus* as well as *Jesus*, will not do here. " Tho' this may pass with many Christians, " who are ready to swallow, without " chewing, any evil Reports of our Na- " tion; yet it can't go down with rea- " sonable and unprejudic'd Men; who " must have other Conceptions of human " Nature in all Ages and Nations, than " to think it possible, that a Man, in *La- " zares*'s Case, can be hated and persecu- " ted for having had such a good and won- " derful Work done on him. And why " then was he hated and persecuted? I " say, for ths, and no other Reason, than " because he was a Confederate with *Je- " sus* in the wicked Imposture, he was put- " ting upon Mankind.

" But supposing, what is never to be " granted, that the *Jews* of old were so " inhuman, brutish, and barbarous as to " hate and persecute *Lazarus* as well as " *Jesus* for this Miracle; yet why did " *Jesus* and his Disciples, with *Lazarus*, " run away and abscond upon it; for they " v. 54. *walk'd no more openly among the* " Jews, *but went thence into a Country near* " *to the Wilderness, and there* Jesus *continued* " *with his Disciples.* Is not here a plain " Sign of Guilt and of Fraud? Men, that " have God's Cause, Truth and Power on " their Side, never want Courage and Re-

" solution

" ſolution to ſtand to it. And however
" your Chriſtian *Prieſts* may palliate the
" cowardly and timerous Conduct of *Je-*
" *ſus* and his Confederates in this Caſe;
" yet with me, it's like Demonſtration,
" that there was a diſcover'd Cheat in the
" Miracle, or they would undauntedly
" have faced their Enemies, without Fears
" and Apprehenſions of Danger from them.

" Our Anceſtors then, who unqueſ-
" tionably detected the Fraud, were in the
" right on't to proſecute with Severity,
" the whole Party concern'd in it: And if
" they had aveng'd the Wickedneſs of it
" upon *Lazarus* as well as they did upon
" *Jeſus*, I ſhould have commended them
" for it. Whether ſuch a monſtrous Im-
" poſture, as was this pretended Miracle,
" happily diſcover'd does not call aloud for
" Vengeance and moſt exemplary Puniſh-
" ment; and whether any Nation of the
" World would ſuffer the like with Im-
" punity, let any Man judge.

" For all the Reports of your Goſpels,
" it is unnatural to hate a miraculous
" Healer of Diſeaſes, and there muſt be
" ſomewhat ſuppreſt about the Inveteracy
" of the *Jews* to *Jeſus*, or his healing
" Power, if it was ſo great as is imagined,
" muſt have reconciled them to him: But
" that they ſhould hate not only *Jeſus* for

" raiſing

" raiſing the dead, but the Perſon rais'd
" by him, is improbable, incredible, and
" impoſſible.

" If Hiſtorians can parallel this Story of
" the Malignity of the *Jews* towards
" *Jeſus* and *Lazarus* upon ſuch a real Mi-
" racle, with Thing equally barbarous
" and inhuman, in any other Sect or Na-
" tion; we will acknowledge the Truth
" of it againſt our ancient Nation: Or if
" ſuch Inhumanity, abſtractedly conſider'd,
" be at all agreeable to the Conceptions any
" one can form of human Nature in the
" moſt uncivilis'd and brutiſh People, we
" will allow our Anceſtors, in this Caſe,
" to have been that People.

" Was ſuch a real and indiſputable Mi-
" racle, as this of *Lazarus* is ſuppoſed, to be
" wrought at this day in Confirmation of
" Chriſtianity, I dare ſay, it would bring
" all us *Jews*, to a Man, into the Belief
" of it: And I don't think it poſſible, for
" any People to be ſo begotted, byaſs'd,
" and prejudiced, as not to be wrought
" on by it. Or if they would not part
" with their Intereſts and Prejudices upon
" it, they would have more Wit and
" Temper, than to break forth into a
" Rage againſt all or any of the Perſons
" concern'd in it. And, for my Life, I
" can entertain no worſe Thoughts of our
" old Nation. " Sup-

" Suppoſing God ſhould ſend an Am-
" baſſador at this day, who, to convince
" Chriſtians of the Miſchiefs and Incon-
" venience of an *Hireling Prieſthood*,
" ſhould work ſuch a Miracle as was this
" of *Lazarus*'s Reſurrection, in the Pre-
" ſence of a multitude of Spectators; how
" would your *Biſhops* and *Clergy* behave
" themſelves upon it? Why, they would
" be as mute as Fiſhes; or if they did
" fret and grieve inwardly for the Loſs
" of their Intereſts; yet they would have
" more Prudence (ask them elſe,) than to
" ſhow their Anger openly, and perſecute
" both *Agent* and *Patient* for it. Where-
" fore then are they ſo cenſorious and un-
" charitable as to preach and believe ano-
" ther Notion and Doctrine of our An-
" ceſtors?

" But if a falſe Prophet, for the ſubver-
" ſion of an *Hireling Prieſthood*, ſhould,
" in ſpite to the *Clergy*, counterfeit ſuch a
" Miracle, and be detected in the Opera-
" tion; how then would Prieſts and Peo-
" ple, Magiſtrates and Subjects behave up-
" on it? Why, they would be full of In-
" dignation, and *from that day forth would*
" *take Council to put* the Impoſtor and his
" Confederate to Death, of which they
" would be moſt deſerving; and if they
" did not abſcond and fly for it, like *Jeſus*

" and

" and his Diſciples *to a Wilderneſs in the*
" *Country* to hide themſelves, the Rage of
" the Populace would hardly wait the
" Leiſure of Juſtice to diſpatch and make
" terrible Examples of them. Was not
" this exactly the Caſe of *Jeſus*'s Impo-
" ſture in the Reſurrection of *Lazarus*,
" and of the Puniſhment he was threaten'd
" with, and afterwards moſt juſtly under-
" went for it ?

" Mankind may be in ſome Caſes very
" obdurate, and ſo hard of Belief, as to ſtand
" it out againſt Senſe, Reaſon and De-
" monſtration : But I will not think worſe
" of our Anceſtors than of the reſt of
" Mankind ; or that they any more than
" others would have withſtood a clear and
" indiſputable Miracle in *Lazarus*'s Reſu-
" ſcitation. Such a manifeſt Miracle, let
" it be wrought for what End and Pur-
" poſe, we can poſſibly imagine, would
" ſtrike Men with Awe and Reverence ;
" and none could hate and perſecute the
" Author of the Miracle; leaſt He who
" could raiſe the dead, ſhould exert his
" Power againſt themſelves, and either
" wound or ſmite them dead with it.
" For which Reaſon, the Reſurrection of
" *Lazarus*, on the certain Knowledge of
" our Anceſtors, was all Fraud, or they
" would reverenc'd and adored the Power
" of him, that did it. " It

" It may be true, what *John* says, that " *many of the Jews, who had seen the Things* " *that Jesus did, believed on him*, that is, " believed that he had wrought here a " great Miracle: But who were these? " the ignorant and credulous, whom a " much less *juggler* than Mr. *Fawkes* could " easily impos'd on. But on the other " hand, it is certain, according to *Christi-* " *an Commentators*, that *some of them* did " not believe the Miracle, but *went their* " *ways to the Pharisees and told them what* " *Things Jesus had done*, that is, told " them, after what manner the Intrigue " was managed; and complain'd of the " Fraud in it. How they came to suspect " and discover the Fraud, was not *John*'s " Business to relate; and for want of " other ancient Memorials, we can only " guess at it. Perhaps they discern'd some " motion in *Lazarus*'s Body, before the " Word of Command, to *come forth*, was " given; perhaps they discover'd some " Fragments of the Food, that for *four* " *days* in the Cave, he had subsisted on: " But however this was, they could not " but take Notice of the *Napkin about his* " *Face* all the while; which *Jesus*, to pre- " vent all suspicion of Cheat, should have " first order'd to be taken off, that his mortify'd Countenance might be view'd,

" before the miraculous Change of it to " Life was wrought. This neglect in " *Jesus* (which I wonder *John* had no " more Wit than to hint at) will be a last- " ing Objection to the Miracle. *Jesus* " was wiser, than not to be aware of the " Objection, which he would have obvi- " ated, if he durst, by a Removal of the " Napkin, to the satisfaction of all Spec- " tators there present. Because this was " not done, we *Jews* now deny, there " was any Miracle wrought; and, whe- " ther our Unbelief upon this Circum- " stance be not well grounded, we appeal " to Christian Priests themselves, who " must own, that, if there was a Miracle " here, the Matter was ill conducted by " *Jesus*, or foolishly related by his *Evan-* " *gelist.*

" It is a sad Misfortune, that attends our " modern enquiry after Truth, that there " are no other Memorials extant of the " Life and Miracles of *Jesus*, than what " are written by his own Disciples. Not " only old Time has devour'd, but Chri- " stians themselves, (which in the Opini- " on of the impartial makes for us) when " they got Power into their Hands, will- " fully destroy'd many Writings of our An- " cestors, as well as of *Celsus* and *Porphi-* " *ry* and others, which they could not an-

" swer;

" ſwer; otherwiſe I doubt not but they " would have given us clear Light into " the Impoſture of *Lazarus*'s Reſurrecti- " on: But if *Jeſus*, according to his own " *Evangeliſts*, was arraign'd for a *Decei-* " *ver* and *Blaſphemer*, in pretending to the " Sonſhip and Power of God by his Mi- " racles; in all Probability this Piece of " Fraud in *Lazarus* was one Article of the " Indictment againſt him; and what makes " it very likely, is that the *Chief Prieſts* " and *Phariſees*, from the Date of this pre- " tended Miracle, *took Council together to* " *put him to Death*, not clandeſtinely or " tumultuouſly to murder him, but judici- " ally to puniſh him with Death, which, " if they proved their Indictment by cre- " dible and ſufficient Witneſſes, he was " moſt worthy of.

" As it is plain from the Story in *John*, " that there was a Diſpute among the By- " ſtanders at *Lazarus*'s Reſurrection, whe- " ther it was a real Miracle or not; ſo it " is the Opinion of us *Jews*, which is of " the Nature of a Tradition, that the " *Chief Prieſts* and civil Magiſtrates of *Be-* " *thany*, for the better Determination of " the Diſpute and quieting of the Minds of " the People; requir'd that *Jeſus* ſhould " react the Miracle upon another Perſon, " there lately dead and buried. But *Je-*

" *Jus* declining this Teſt of his Power, the " whole Multitude of Believers as well as " of Unbelievers before, queſtion'd the " Reſurrection of *Lazarus*; and were high- " ly incens'd againſt both him and *Je-* " *ſus* for the Deceit in it. And this was " *one* Reaſon among others of that vehe- " ment and univerſal Outcry and Demand, " at *Jeſus*'s Tryal, for his Crucifixion. I'll " not anſwer for the Certainty of this " Tradition or Opinion, but as the Expe- " dient was obvious, ſo it has the Face of " Truth and Credibility; and for the " Proof of it, I need only appeal to Chriſ- " tain *Prieſts* and *Magiſtrates*; whether, " under a Diſpute of a Miracle of that " Conſequence, they would not require, " for full Satisfaction, it ſhould be acted " over again; and, if the *Juggler* refuſed, " whether there would not be a general " Clamour of People of all Ranks for his " *Execution.*

" *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke*, who knew " as much of this Sham-Miracle as *John*, " had not the Confidence to report it; " becauſe, when they wrote, many Eye- " Witneſſes of the Fraud were alive to " diſprove and contradict them; therefore " they confined their Narratives to *Jeſus*'s " leſs juggling Tricks, that had paſs'd more " current: But after the *Jewiſh* State

" was

" was diſſolved, their judicial Records were
" deſtroy'd, and every Body dead that
" could confute him, *John* ventures a-
" broad the Story of this Miracle; and if
" the good Providence of God had not
" infatuated him, in the Inſertion of the
" Circumſtances here obſerved, it might
" have paſs'd through all Generations to
" come, as well as it has done for many
" paſt, for a grand Miracle.

" Thus, *Sir*, have you a few of my
" Thoughts on the pretended Miracle of
" *Lazarus*'s Reſurrection. I have more to
" beſtow on it, but that I would not be
" tedious. There's no need to argue a-
" gainſt the other two Reſurrection-Stories.
" You know *omne majus includit minus*,
" and if the greateſt of the three Miracles
" be an Impoſture, the two leſs ones of
" Conſequence are Artifice and Fraud.
" And rather than the Miracle of *Lazarus*
" ſhall ſtand its Ground, I'll have t'other
" Bout at it from ſome other Circum-
" ſtances; the Conſideration of which will
" make it as fooliſh and wicked an Impo-
" ſture, as ever was contrived and tran-
" ſacted in the World; ſuch a *wicked Im-
" poſture* of moſt pernicious Conſequence to
" the Welfare of the Publick, that it is
" no Wonder, the People, by an unani-
" mous Voice, call'd for the Releaſment

" of

" of *Barrabas*, a Robber and Murderer,
" before *Jesus*. I don't suppose these Ar-
" guments against this Miracle will be con-
" vincing of your Christian *Clergy*, who are
" hired to the Belief of it. But howe-
" ver, a *Bishop* of many *thousands* a Year
" to believe, can't in Conscience deny,
" that the Arguments above are a sufficient
" Justification of our *Jewish* Disbelief of
" it.

" If you, Sir, should write a Discourse
" against the Letter of the Story of *Je-*
" *sus*'s Resurrection, I beg of you to ac-
" cept of a few of my Conceptions on that
" Head, which, I promise you, shall be
" out of the common Road of thinking.
" Your *Divines* think they have exhausted
" that Subject, and absolutely confuted
" all Objections that can be made against
" it, but are much mistaken. Sometimes
" we *Jews* dip into their Writings on this
" Head, and always smile with Indigna-
" tion at their foolish Invectives against the
" Blindness of the Eyes, and Hardness of
" the Hearts of our Ancestors. If they
" would but favour us with a Liberty to
" write for our selves, a reasonable Liber-
" ty, which in this Philosophical Age we
" don't despair of, especially under so wise,
" just and good a Civil Administration, as
" this Nation is happily bless'd with, we

" would

" would cut them out ſome more Work,
" which they are not aware of. In the
" mean Time I am your aſſured Friend,
N. N.

So ends the Letter of my Friend, the *Jewiſh Rabbi*, which conſiſts of *calm* and *ſedate* Reaſoning, or I would not have publiſh'd it; for I am reſolv'd he ſhall no more impoſe upon me with his ludicrous and bantering Stuff, like his Satirical Invective againſt *Jeſus*'s Miracle of *turning Water into Wine*, ſo offenſive to our Godly *Biſhops*. And becauſe it conſiſts of *calm* and *ſedate* Reaſoning, which *Biſhop Smalbroke* allows of, I hope his *Lordſhip* will take it into Conſideration, and write an Anſwer to it, which I, without the Help of the Myſtery, can't do.

If the foreſaid *Letter* be offenſive to our *Clergy*, who don't judge it meet that the *Jews* ſhould take this Liberty to write againſt the Miracles of our Saviour, and in Vindication of their own disbelief of Chriſtianity, I beg of them, for the Love of *Jeſus*, not to let their Diſpleaſure be viſibly ſeen; becauſe the *Jews* will then laugh in their Sleeves, and perhaps openly inſult and triumph upon it: But if they will privately acquaint me with their Diſpleaſure

at

at it, I'll promiſe them to hold no more Correſpondence with ſuch *Jewiſh Rabbies*; neither will I ever hereafter publiſh any other Objections againſt *Chriſt*'s Religion and Miracles, than what come from the *Hotentots* and *Pawawers:* and then it will be ſtrange, if our dignified *Clergy*, of moſt grave and demure Looks, can't ſolidly confute the worſt, that ſuch ignorant and illiterate People can urge againſt them.

And thus have I done with my Objections againſt the Letter of theſe three Miracles. If our *Divines* ſhall think there is little or nothing of Force in them; then an Anſwer, which I ſhould be glad to ſee, may the more eaſily be made to them. As for my part, without being conceited of the Acuteneſs and Strength of any of the Objections, I think it impoſſible ſatisfactorily to reply to them, without having Recourſe to the Opinions of the Fathers, that theſe three Miracles, whether they were ever litterally tranſacted or not, are now but emblematical Repreſentations of myſterious and more wonderful Operations to be perform'd by *Jeſus*.

To the Fathers then let us go for their myſtical Interpretation of theſe Miracles. St. *Auguſtin*, in his Introduction to a Sermon on the Widow of *Naim*'s Son, ſays

(29) thus, " There are ſome ſo ſilly as to " ſtand amazed at the corporal Miracles " of *Jeſus*, and have no Conſideration of " his greater and ſpiritual Miracles, ſigni- " fied by them: but others who are wiſer " can hear of the Things that *Jeſus* did " on Men's Body, without being aſtoniſh'd " at them, chuſing rather to contemplate " with Admiration his more wonderful " Works on Men's Souls, after the ſimili- " tude of bodily Miracles. And theſe are " the Chriſtians that conform their Studies " to the Will of our Lord; who would " have his corporal Miracles, ſpiritually " interpreted: For He wrought not Mi- " racles in the Fleſh, for the ſake of ſuch " Miracles abſtractedly conſider'd; but

(29) Quidam corporalia ejus Miracula ſtupentes, majora intueri non norunt. Quidam vero ea, quæ geſta audiunt in Corporibus nunc amplius in Animis admirantur. —— Dominus enim noſter Jeſus Chriſtus ea quæ faciebat corporaliter, etiam ſpiritaliter volebat intelligi; neque enim Miracula propter Miracula faciebat, ſed ut illa quæ faciebat, mira eſſent Videntibus, vera eſſent Intelligentibus. —— Alii & facta mirati et intellecta aſſecuti. Tales nos eſſe debemus in Schola Chriſti. ---- Hoc dixi (de ficu arefacta) ut perſuaderem Dominum Jeſum Chriſtum ideo Miracula feciſſe, ut aliquid illis Miraculis ſignificaret; ut excepto eo, quod mira & magna & divina erant, aliquid inde etiam diſceremus. Videamus ergo quid nos diſcere voluit in tribus mortuis, quos ſuſcitavit. *In Serm.* xcviii.

" that, if they were ſurpriſing to ſome " Mens Senſes, they ſhould be more aſto- " niſhing to the Underſtanding of others, " who apprehend the ſpiritual Meaning of " them. And they who by Contempla- " tion can attain to the myſtical Sygnifi- " cation of *Jeſus*'s Miracles, are the beſt " Scholars and moſt learn'd Diſciples in " his Church and School. And, (*ſpeaking* " *of the Abſurdity of Jeſus's curſing the* " *Figtree according to the Letter*) preſent- " ly after ſays, that this he obſerv'd, that " he might perſuade his Hearers to think, " that our Lord *Jeſus* therefore wrought " Miracles, that he might ſignify ſomewhat " by them, which he would have his Di- " ſciples to learn and conſider of. Come " now, *ſays he*, and let us ſee what we " are miſtically and ſpiritually to under- " ſtand by the Stories of the three Per- " ſons rais'd from the dead."

There are two Ways, that the Fathers took in the moral and myſtical Interpretation of theſe Miracles: One was from the Number *three*, and the Difference in Magnitude. According to which they ſaid with St *Auguſtine* (30) that theſe three ſorts

(30) Iſta tria Genera Mortuorum, ſunt tria Genera Peccatorum, quos hodie ſuſcitat Chriſtus. --- Sunt

ſorts of dead Perſons, ſo rais'd to Life, are Figures of three ſorts of Sinners, whom *Jeſus* raiſeth from the death of Sin to the Life of Righteouſneſs. They who have conceiv'd Sin in their Hearts, and have not brought it forth into Act; are figured by *Jairus*'s Daughter, who lay dead in the Houſe of her Father, and was not taken forth to her Burial. Others, who after Cogitation and Conſent, paſs into actual Sin are figured by the young Man, carried towards his Grave. But thoſe Sinners, who are habituated and long accuſtom'd to Sin, are like *Lazarus* bury'd, and in a ſtinking Condition under the Cor-

Sunt ergo inſtar filiæ Synagogæ Principis, qui peccatum intus in Corde habent, in facto nondum habent. Condemnatur Conſenſus ad Iniquitatem; reſpiratur ad Salutem atq; Juſtitiam. Surgit mortuus in Domo, reviviſcit Cor in Cogitationis Secreto. Facta eſt iſta Reſurrectio Animæ mortuæ intus intra Latebras Conſcientiæ, tanquam intra Domeſticos Parietes. -- Alii poſt Conſenſum eunt in factum, tanquam efferentes mortuum, ut quod latebat in Secreto, appareat in publica. Nonne illi juveni dictum eſt, *Tibi dico, ſurge* & redditus eſt Matri; ſic qui jam fecerit, ſi forte admonitus & commotus Verbo Veritatis ad Chriſti Vocem reſurgit, vivus redditur Eccleſiæ. --- Qui autem faciendo quod malum eſt, etiam mala Conſuetudine ſe implicant, tales Conſuetudine maligna preſſi, tanquam ſepulti, ita ſepulti ut de Lazaro dictum eſt, jam *putet*. In Serm. xcviii.

ruption of it; whom *Jesus*, for all that, with the *loud Voice* of the Prædication of his Gospel, will call forth out of the Death and Grave of their Sins to a new Life. So does *St. Augustin* make these three dead Persons and their Resurrections Emblems of the said three Sorts of Sinners, who are dead in Trespasses and Sins, and by the Power of *Jesus* quicken'd to a Life of Righteousness. And to this Opinion of *St. Augustin*, do *St. Ambrose*, *Eusebius Gallicanus*, and Venerable *Bede* agree. And according to this Notion of these Miracles they descend to a particular Explication of the several Parts of their Stories. As to give you two or three Instances.

The People who were turn'd out of the House, upon the raising of *Jarius*'s Daughter, which is an *Absurdity* according to the *Letter* are, says (31) *Bede*, a Multitude of wordly and wicked Thoughts, which, except they are excluded from the Secrets of the Heart, are a Hindrance of the Resurrection of a Sinner to a new Life.

(31) *Cum ejecta esset Turba, intravit.* Moraliter non resurgit Anima, quæ intrinsecus jacet mortua, nisi prius a secretioribus Cordis excludatur inopportuna sæcularium Cogitationum Multitudo. *In Loc. Matt.*

The

The Bearers of the Young Man (32) to his Burial are Vices, evil Spirits, Hæreticks, and Seducers; and the *Widow*, his Mother, to whom he was reſtored, is the *Church*, who mourns for the Death of ſuch Sinners, as are typified by that Young Man.

Jeſus's *weeping* for dead *Lazarus*, which is an *Abſurdity* according to the *Letter*, is a Sign (33) of the deplorable State, that habitual Sinners are in, enough to excite the Sorrows and Mournings of good Chriſtians, who have the Spirit of *Chriſt*, for them. And the Stone that lay at the Grave of *Lazarus*, is (34) a figure of the Hardneſs of the Heart of ſuch a Sinner

(32) Mali iſti Portitores, qui ad ſepeliendum hominem ferunt, ſunt Vitia & maligni ſpiritus, Hæretici & ſeductores. Hos enim niſi Dominus ſiſteret, quoſcunq; ſemel acciperent, ſepulturæ & æternæ Damnationi traderent. Suſcitatus igitur Adoleſcens ſedet, loquitur & Matri redditur, quia ad Pœnitentiam converſus in Eccleſiæ pace quieſcit, Dei Magnalia loquitur, ſua peccata confitetur; & Eccleſiæ reconciliatur. *Euſeb. Gallic. in Homil. Feriæ quintæ poſt Domin. 4tam.*

(33) Et *lacrymatus eſt Jeſus.* Lacrymemur igitur & nos pro omnibus illis, quos in Fœtore Vitiorum jacere ſentimus. *Euſeb. Gallic. in Homil. Feriæ 5tæ poſt Domin. 4tam.*

(34) Lapis autem revolutus a Monumento ſignificat Infidelitatis Duritiam ab Hominum Corde ſubmotam. *Theoph. Antioch. in Loc. Johan.*

which

which must be taken away before *Jesus* will call him to a new Life. So do the Fathers moralise and allegorise every Minute Circumstance of these three Miracles, as any one, who will consult them, may find, and save me the Trouble of a tedious Recital of their Authorities.

But the other mystical Way of interpreting these three Miracles is by making them Types of three great Events at the Time of *Christ*'s spiritual Advent. Accordingly the raising of *Jairus*'s Daughter is a Type of the Conversion of the *Jews* at that Day, as *Eusebius Gallicanus* (35) and venerable *Bede* (36) and others expound it. By *Jairus*, the Ruler of a *Synagogue*; is meant *Moses* (37); and by his Daughter is to be understood the *Jewish Church*, which, being at present in a State of Spiritual Death, will be revived and converted in the Perfection of Time. And to the mystical Resurrection or Restitution of the *Jewish Synagogue*, call'd *Jairus*'s

(35) Quod enim tunc temporis factum est in una Puella, hoc in fine Temporum futurum est, ut fiat in tota Synagoga. *In Homil. Feriæ 5ta post Domin. 4tam.*

(36) Synagoga circa finem sæculi erit restituta saluti. *In Loc. Matt.*

(37) Jairus illuminatus vel illuminans, Moses intelligitur. *Bed.* in *Loc. Matt.*

Daughter

Daughter, will *Jeſus* come (38) at the ſame Time he heals the Woman of the Church of her Iſſue of Blood. And this is the Reaſon that the Stories of theſe two Miracles are blended together by the *Evangeliſts*, with their ſynchronical Numbers of the Age of the *Girl* and of the Diſeaſe of the Woman; becauſe they are Types of that bleſſed Scene of Affairs at the Converſion of the *Jews*, when the Fulneſs of the *Gentiles* is come in. Concerning which bleſſed ſtate of the Church, *Origen* (39) ſays, *Jeſus* wrought many Miracles, by Way of Type and Figure.

Among all the Miracles that *Jeſus* wrought, and are recorded by the *Evangeliſts*, I think, as far as I have had Occaſion to obſerve, the Fathers are moſt ſcanty in their Interpretations of that of the

(38) Ad hanc ergo Principis filiam dum properat Dei Verbum, ut ſalvos faceret filios Iſrael, ſancta Eccleſia de Gentibus congregata, quæ inferiorum Lapſu Criminum deperibat, paratam aliis fide præripuit Sanitatem. *St. Ambroſ. in Loc. Luc.* Quod vero poſt reſtitutam immundæ Mulieri Valetudinem, defuncta Puella a mortuis reſtituitur; ne hoc quidem ab exquiſita Allegoria alienum. Nam Relliquiæ ſilvæ fiant, juxta Apoſtolum, cum ingreſſa fuerit Gentium Plenitudo. *Theop. Ceram. in Homil. de Jairia filia.*

(39) Quarum Rerum Cauſa multa fuere Jeſu Miracula. *In Johan. Cap. XI.*

Widow

Widow of *Naim*'s Son: Excepting what is before noted of his being a figure of a Sinner dead in actual, tho' not habitual Sin, I find very little. But if *Origen*'s Comments on this Miracle had been extant, I dare say he would have given us this following Interpretation of it. This Widow, he would have call'd the Church; and her *only Son* or masculine Ofspring, he would have call'd the *Spiritual Sense* of the Scriptures, which is now dead, and that the *Ministers* of the *Letter*, who are his Bearers, are for interring him within the *Earth* of the *Letter*: But *Jesus*, upon his Spiritual Advent will put a stop to the Intention of such Bearers, by reviving the *Spiritual Sense* of the Scriptures; and by restoring it, like a *quicken'd Son*, to the Comfort of his Mother, the Church; who has been in a sorrowful and lamentable Condition upon the Death and Want of it. This, I am sure, would be *Origen*'s Interpretation of this Miracle, which, if I had Room here, by a little Circumlocution, I could prove.

As to *Lazarus*'s Resurrection, it is in the Opinion of the Fathers (40) a Type of the general

(40) Per Lazarum Genus humanum ostenditur. *Theop. Antioch. in Loc. Johan.* Nostra Resurrectio figuratur per Lazari Resurrectionem. --- Spelunca sive

general and myſtical Reſurrection of Mankind in the Perfection of Time. But this is a moſt copious Subject; and unleſs I could here throughly handle it, I had much better ſay nothing.

And thus have I done with the three Reſurrection Stories. If the *Convocation*, next Seſſion, would determine by an Orthodox Vote, whether *Jeſus* rais'd any more, than the ſaid three Perſons, from the dead or not; I would preſent them with a new and more entertaining Chain of Thoughts againſt theſe Miracles; ſuch a Chain of Thoughts, as, upon the Concluſion, let them hold which Side of the Queſtion they pleaſe, will neceſſarily induce us to hold the myſtical Meaning of theſe Miracles, or to grant that *Jeſus* rais'd none from the dead at all.

My next and laſt *Diſcourſe* on *Jeſus*'s Miracles ſhall be againſt the Letter of the Story of his own Reſurrection, in which, if our *Biſhops* will keep their Temper and Patience, till I publiſh it. I'll cut out ſuch a Piece of Work for our *Boy-*

ſive Sepulchrum Lazari Litteram Legis umbratilem deſignat. ---- *Magna Voce clamavit Jeſus*, id eſt, Prædicatio Evangelii per quam humana Natura Peccatorum Vinculis & in Sepulchro Infidelitatis jacens vocatur ad Vitam. *Theop. Caram. in Homil. de Lazaro.*

lean Lectures, as ſhall hold them tug, ſo long as the *Miniſtry* of the *Letter* and an *Hireling Prieſthood* ſhall laſt. If *Chriſt be not riſen*, then, according to the Inference of St. *Paul*, *is their Preaching vain*; and why ſhould the People be any longer charg'd with the Maintenance of an ignorant and idle Order of Men, to no Uſe and Purpoſe?

If I had not had Experience of it, I could never have believed that, for all the ludicrous Nature of theſe *Diſcourſes*, our *dignified Clergy* could have been ſo fooliſh or malicious as to proſecute me for an *Infidel* and *Blaſphemer* upon them. How a Man may be miſtaken in himſelf! I took my ſelf for a real Advocate for the Truth of Chriſtianity; and was ſo vain as to imagine, theſe Diſcourſes tended to a Demonſtration of *Jeſus*'s Meſiahſhip: And tho' the *Biſhop* of *London* may be of a contrary Opinion, yet I am ſtill ſo conceited of my Ability to defend our Religion, that I'll ſtake my Life againſt his *Biſhoprick*, which I'll not be troubled with, if I win it, that he can't form an Objection againſt Chriſtianity, which I can't ſolidly confute, and make our Readers merry too, with his Weakneſs and Impertinence in it. But perhaps it may be unbecoming of his Lordſhip's Character, and againſt the Grain,

Grain, to make an Objection to that Religion, which he finds much *temporal*, as well as ſome *ſpiritual* Comfort in the Profeſſion of; I will therefore deſcend to another Propoſal, *viz.* If he'll but publiſh an Anſwer to the *Jewiſh Rabbi*'s Letter in this Diſcourſe, and vouchſafe me the pleaſure of a Reply to him; then (to ſave the Civil Magiſtrate's Trouble) I will ſuffer any Puniſhment that in his Clemency he ſhall think fit to inflict on me, for what's paſt. Oh, what a Hazard do I here run of Life or Liberty!

Some Chriſtians, in my Caſe, would think it a ſad Misfortune to be odiouſly repreſented as an *Infidel* and *Blaſphemer*; but I, in Temper and Principle, deſpiſe ſuch Obloquies, Slanders and Defamations; and would not give a Ruſh to remove them, ſo long as I had the Anſwer of a good Conſcience that I was undeſerving of them: But conſidering, that it is the Duty of a Chriſtian to ſeek the Peace and Friendſhip of all about him, and eſpecially of our good *Biſhops*, who, in Compaſſion to the Danger they think my Soul is in, have taken zealous and laudable Pains with the *Civil Magiſtrate* for my Conviction and Converſion; I do here, for the ſake of a Reconciliation with their *Lordſhips* and other good People, make a for-

mal and ſolemn Confeſſion of my Chriſtian Faith, which tho' I don't expreſs in the Words of the *Apoſtical*, *Nicene* or *Athanaſian* Creeds; yet will do it in ſuch Terms as will be a Demonſtration that at the Bottom I am ſound as a *Roch.* Be it known then to all Chriſtian People, that

Imprimis, I believe upon the Authority of the Fathers, that the Miniſtry of the Letter of the *Old* and *New* Teſtament is downright *Antichriſtianiſm.*

Item, I believe upon the Authority of the Fathers, that the Miracles of *Jeſus*, as they are recorded by the Evangeliſts, *litterally* underſtood, are the *lying Wonders* of Antichriſt.

Item, I believe upon the Authority of the Fathers, that all Oppoſition and Contradiction to ſpiritual and allegorical Interpretations of the Scripture, is the Sin of *Blaſphemy* againſt the Holy Ghoſt.

Item, I believe upon the Authority of the Fathers, that the *Miniſtry* of the *Spiris*, or allegorical Interpretations, of the Law and the Prophets will be the Converſion of *Jews* and *Gentiles.*

Item,

Item, I believe upon the Authority of the Fathers, that the *Miniſtry* of the *Letter*, and an Hireling-Prieſthood have been the Cauſe of the Infidelity and Apoſtacy of theſe latter Times.

Item, I believe upon the Authority of the Fathers, that the Spirit and Power of *Jeſus* will ſoon enter the Church and expel Hireling-Prieſts, who make Merchandiſe of the Goſpel, out of her, after the manner he is ſuppos'd to have driven the *Buyers* and *Sellers* out of the Temple.

Theſe are a few Articles of that Faith, once deliver'd to the *Saints* of the primitive Church, which I firmly believe, and will earneſtly contend for. Now I appeal to the Chriſtian World, whether a Man of ſuch a Faith, like Heart of Oak, can be an Infidel or Blaſphemer. Upon this ingenuous Confeſſion of my Faith, which I make by way of Atonement for my paſt ſuppoſed Errors and Offences, I hope the *Biſhops* and all good Chriſtian People will be reconciled to me.

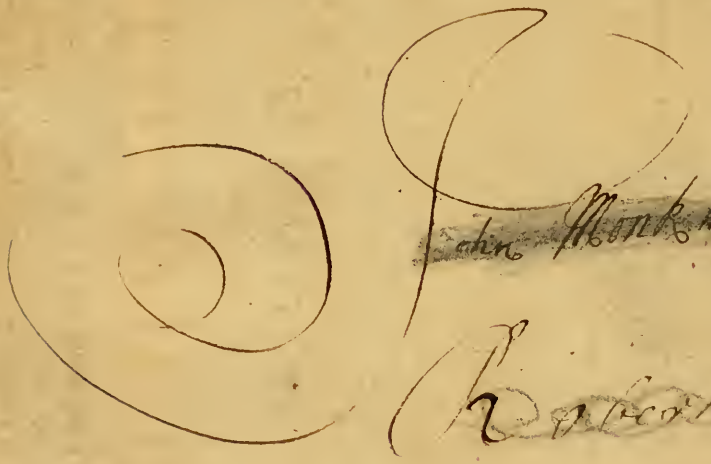
St. *Jame's* ſays, that *Faith without Works is dead*, and how a Man ought to ſhow his Faith by his Works, without which

which Faith is an empty and airy Nothing. Accordingly I am making what haſte I can to ſhow the Sincerity of my Faith by theſe my *Works* and *Diſcourſes* of this Kind. And by the Grace of God, I hope our Biſhops will find me as unmoveable as a Rock in the ſaid Faith.

According to the foreſaid Articles of this my Faith, I am ſo fully convinced, not only of the Error of the *Miniſtry* of the *Letter*, but of the Miſchiefs and Inconvenience of an *Hireling-Prieſthood*, that, having ſet my Shoulders to the Work, I am reſolv'd, by the Help of God, to endeavour to give *both* a Lift out of this World. This is fair and generous Warning to our *Clergy* to ſit faſt, and look to their own Safety, or they may find me a ſtronger Man than they may be aware of. And tho' I don't expect long to ſurvive the Accompliſhment of ſo great and glorious a Work; yet I am delightfully raviſh'd and tranſported with the Forethought and Contemplation of the Happineſs of Mankind, upon the Extinction of Eccleſiaſtical *Vermin*, out of God's Houſe; when the World will return to its *Primogenial* and *Paradiſaical* State of Nature, Religion and Liberty; in which we ſhall be *all taught of God*, and *have no need* of a fooliſh and contentious Prieſt, hired to harangue

rangue us with his Noiſe and Nonſenſe. Which bleſſed State of the World God of his infinite Mercy haſten, for the ſake of our Spiritual Meſſiah, Mediator and Redeemer *Jeſus Chriſt*. To whom be Glory for ever. *Amen*.

F I N I S.



A SIXTH

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR,

In VIEW of the Preſent Controverſy between INFIDELS and APOSTATES.

Jamque Opus exegi, ——

By THO. WOOLSTON, B. D. ſometime Fellow of *Sidney-College* in *Cambridge.*

LONDON:

Printed for the Author, and Sold by him next door to the *Star*, in *Aldermanbury*, and by the Bookſellers of *London*, and *Weſtminſter*, 1729.

[Price One Shilling.]

TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God

JOHN,

Lord Bishop of *Oxford.*

My Lord,

HEN the following *Discourse* was finish'd and ready for the *Press*, I consider'd to what *Bishop* the *Dedication* of it would be most acceptable; (for I am resolv'd that none but *Bishops* as yet shall have the Honour of my *Dedications*;) and

I had not long ponder'd upon the Matter, before I hit upon your *Lordſhip*, who muſt needs be pleas'd with this *Diſcourſe*, becauſe of the Advantage, that you, as well as myſelf, in the End, will reap by it.

By Virtue of your *Profeſſorſhip* at *Oxford*, you, *My Lord*, are a *Moderator* at theological Diſputations, as I am here: And whether the Execution of your Office be as troubleſome as mine is, I know not: But if the Deſign of this *Diſcourſe* take Place, we ſhall find that modern Controverſies about Religion are all vain; and thereupon be *both* of us ſoon eas'd of the Trouble of our *Moderations* at them.

It may be, *my Lord*, you are not ſo weary of your *Moderatorſhip*, as I am: Beſides, that you are better paid for your Pains, your Diſputants are more amicable, and in the midſt of their Diſputes more tractable

tractable: Tho they may warmly contend, at the preſent, for and againſt the Point in Debate; yet like *Lawyers* who are no leſs zealous for their *Clients* in the Day, they commonly agree to drink a Bottle together at Night, and go to Bed, good Friends. And this is very well done of them.

But my Diſputants, *my Lord*, call'd *Infidels* and *Apoſtates*, at whoſe Controverſy I have the Trouble, by the Appointment of the Fathers, to preſide, are more ſtubborn, turbulent and refractory. What ill Treatment they would give each other, if it was in their Power, I know not: But my *Apoſtates*, ſince they can't be aveng'd on their Adverſarys, are full of Reſentment againſt their *Moderator*, becauſe I am not altogether partial to their ſide; and how I ſhall eſcape their Indignation, God alone knows.

Whatever

Whatever the *Clergy*, *my Lord*, whom I dignify with the Title of *Apoſtates*, may think, I look upon myſelf as a notable *Moderator* of the Controverſy; I have ſhewn them all the Favour I can in it, and would have brought them off with Honor, but for a *little Flaw*, here diſcover'd, in the Foundation of their Church, which, for the Determination of our Diſputes, muſt be confeſs'd and granted.

If your *Lordſhip*, upon reading this *Diſcourſe*, ſhould be of the ſame Mind with me, I beg of you to Stroak the *Clergy* into Temper, Patience and Compliance; Tell them, they have been long orthodox and glorious Victors over *Infidels*, and that it would be now an Act of Generoſity to yield to them in a *ſmall Point*; upon which ſuch a Pacification would enſue, as nothing hereafter would be able to diſſolve.

But

But I have another Favour, *my Lord*, here to crave of you, that you would be pleas'd to perſuade my old Friend the *Biſhop* of *London* to ſtay at Home this *Lent*, and keep to his *Prayers* and *Faſting*, for the caſting out a certain *Kind* of—, that by fits he's unhappily troubled with; or upon the Publication of this *Diſcourſe*, I ſhall be in Danger of being ſoon knapp'd for it.

If your *Lordſhip* will do me that Favour, then I will do you as good a Turn; and praiſe you for your Doctrine of *Paſſive Obedience*, preach'd at the Coronation: Tho many may laugh at your Revival of that Doctrine, Saying, the *Clergy* upon an Occaſion, which our moſt excellent *Sovereign* will never give them, would again have Recourſe to their *Reſerves* and *Diſtinctions*; yet I ſay it was well done of your *Lordſhip* to preach it, that the Tongues

and

and the Hands (to Say nothing of the Hearts) of the *Clergy* might go together in Subscriptions to *Articles* and *Homilys*; and so avoid that Prevarication and Inconsistency, which some now have no more Wit than to charge them with.

So not questioning your *Lordship*'s Approbation of this *Discourse* and the *Dedication*; nor doubting but you'll make me as bountiful a Recompence for it, as any of my other Episcopal Patrons have done; I subscribe my self,

My Lord,

Feb: 15th 1728-9. *The Admirer of your*

Passive Obedience Sermon

Thomas Woolston.

A SIXTH

DISCOURSE

ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

SAVIOUR, &c.

HERE goes my ſixth and laſt *Diſcourſe* on *Jeſus*'s *Miracles*; the Subject whereof is the literal Story of his own Reſurrection; which, according to the Propoſition in hand, I am to ſhow to conſiſt of Abſurditys, Improbabilitys and Incredibilitys. And I hope our *Biſhops* will quietly permit the Publication of this *Diſcourſe*, eſ-

 pecially

pecially if I assure them, that I mean nothing worse by it, than to make way for the Understanding, what the Fathers write of, the mystical Resurrection of *Jesus* out of the Grave of the Letter of the Law and the Prophets; of which mystical Resurrection of our *spiritual Jesus*, the Evangelical Story of the Resurrection of a *carnal Christ* is but mere Type and Shadow.

I am so far from designing any Service to Infidelity by this *Discourse*, that I aim at the Accomplishment of some of St. *John*'s Apocalyptical Visions. The Fathers say that a *Church*, built on the Letter of the Scriptures, particularly on the Letter of *Jesus*'s Miracles, is *Babylon*; and that antiliteral Arguments and mystical Interpretations will be the downfal of her. Whether there is any Truth in this Opinion of the Fathers, I am minded to make the Experiment; and tho I should bring the old House of the Church over my Head, and be crush'd to Pieces in its Ruins, I can't forbear it: But however, I would advise the *Clergy* to make haste and *come out of Babylon*, for fear of the worst; or they, who upon the Authority of the Fathers are *the Merchants of Babylon*, will *weep* (1) *and mourn* upon her

(1) Revelations Ch. xviii. 11.

Fall

Fall, becauſe *none will buy their Merchandize* of the Letter *any more*. Dear *Jeſu*, that ſuch a *Student*, as I am, in the *Revelations* of St. *John*, and an Interpreter of them too upon the Authority of the Fathers ſhould be charg'd with Blaſphemy and Infidelity !

So to Work I went; and I had not been long muſing by myſelf, how to ſap this Foundation of the Church, before I was ſenſible of my own Inſufficiency for it. Whereupon I ſent to my old Friend, the *Jewiſh Rabbi*, for his Thoughts on this grand Miracle of *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection, which he gave me ſome Promiſe of. But I deſired him to forbear all Ludicrouſneſs, Satire and Banter for fear of Offence : For tho our *Clergy* liked Volumes of Jeſts and Facetiouſneſs, if they were diſcharg'd againſt *Jews*, *Turks*, and *Infidels*; yet when they were levell'd at *Miniſters* of the *Letter* the *Caſe was alter'd*, as quoth *Plowden*, and they were not to be born with. Therefore he was to remember that decency, ſeriouſneſs and calmneſs of Argument, required by the *Biſhop* of *London* (2) or I durſt not print it.

In Compliance with my Deſires he ſent me the following Letter, which, having

(2) *In his Paſtoral Letter*, p. 35.

purg'd it of a few *Puns* and *Cunundrums*, because all Appearance of *Wit*, as of *Evil*, was to be abstain'd from, I here publish, and it runs thus.

SIR,

ACcording to your Request, I here send you my Thoughts on *Jesus*'s Resurrection, in which I shall be shorter than I would be, because of the customary Bounds of your *Discourse*.

The Controversy between us *Jews* and you *Christians* about the *Messiah* has hitherto been of a diffusive Nature: But as the subject of *this* is the Resurrection of your *Jesus*; so by my Consent, we'll now reduce the Controversy to a narrow Compass, and let it turn entirely on this grand Miracle and Article of your Faith. If your *Divines* can prove *Jesus*'s Resurrection against the following Objections, then I will acknowledge him to be the *Messiah*, and will turn Christian, otherwise he must still pass with us for an Impostor and false Prophet.

I have often lamented the Loss of such Writings, which our *Ancestors* unquestionably dispers'd against *Jesus*, because of the clear light they would give us, into the Cheat and Imposture of his Religion.

But

But I rejoice and thank God, there is little or no want of them, to the Point in Hand. For I had not long meditated on the Story of *Jesus*'s Resurrection, as your *Evangelists* have related it, but I plainly discern'd it to be the most notorious and monstrous Imposture, that ever was put upon Mankind. And if you please to attend to my following Arguments, which require no depth of Judgment and Capacity to apprehend, I am persuaded that you and every one disinterested, will be of the same Mind too.

To overthrow and confute the Story of this monstrous and incredible Miracle, I was thinking once to premise an Argument of the Justice of the Sentence denounc'd against and executed upon *Jesus*, who was so far from being the innocent Person, you Christians would make of him, that, as may easily be proved, he was so grand a *Deceiver*, *Impostor* and *Malefactor*, as no Punishment could be too great for him. But this Argument (which I reserve against a Day of perfect Liberty, to publish by itself in Defence of the Honour and Justice of our *Ancestors*) would be too long for the Compass of this Letter; and therefore I pass it by, tho it would give Force to my following Objections; it being hard and even impossible to imagine, that

that God would vouchsafe the Favour of a miraculous Resurrection to one, who for his Crimes deservedly suffer'd and underwent Death.

But waveing, I say, that Argument for the present, which of itself would be enough to prejudice a reasonable Man against the Belief of *Jesus*'s Resurrection; I will allow *Jesus* to have been a much better Man, than I believe him to have been; or as good a one in Morals as your Divines do suppose him; and will only consider the Circumstances of the Evangelical Story of his Resurrection; from which, if I don't prove it to have been the most bare-fac'd Imposture that ever was put upon the World, I deserve for the Vanity of this Attempt a much worse Punishment than he for his Frauds endured.

I have sometimes wonder'd, considering the Nature and Heinousness of *Jesus*'s Faults, for which he dy'd, that our *Chief Priests* and *Pharisees* had any regard to his Prediction (which was so like a Bambouzlement of the Populace) that he was to rise again the *third Day* after his Crucifixion. There's no other Nation in the World, which would not have slighted such a vain Prognostication of a known Impostor. Let him foretel with ever so much Confidence

fidence his ſpeedy return to Life, I dare ſay, any other Magiſtrates of ordinary Prudence would have deſpiſed him for a preſumptuous *Enthuſiaſt*: But, when I reflected on the Impoſture of *Lazarus*'s Reſurrection, and of what pernicious Conſequence it had like to have proved to the Peace and Welfare of our Nation, if it had not been happily diſcover'd, my Wonder here ceas'd; and I as much admire now the Wiſdom, Caution and Circumſpection of our *Chief Prieſts* againſt all poſſible Fraud and Deceit in the foretold Reſurrection of *Jeſus*. Tho *Jeſus* himſelf, the Head of the Confederacy, and prime Projector of the deſign'd Cheat in the Caſe of *Lazarus* was cut off, yet his Aſſociates were ſtill numerous; and it was not impoſſible, but they might concert a Project of a counterfeited Reſurrection of him, in Accompliſhment of his Prophecy, that might be of more fatal Conſequence, and tend to ſuch Confuſions and Diſtractions among the People, as would not be ſoon quell'd and quieted. Whereupon our *Chief Prieſts* very prudently conſider of Precautions againſt Cheat here, and wiſely make Application to *Pilat* the *Governor*, that proper and effectual Meaſures may be taken againſt a falſe and feign'd Reſurrection, for Fear of the ill Effects of it.

And

And one of them, as the *Spokesman* of their Company, seems, according to *Matthew*, Ch. xxvii. to have made the Speech following.

SIR, "We remember that this Deceiver and Impostor *Jesus*, who was "yesterday crucified and justly suffer'd "Death for his Blasphemy and many Delusions of the People (that were of bad "Consequence, and might have been of "much worse, if he had not been timely "brought to condign Punishment) said "repeatedly before, that notwithstanding "the Death he was to undergo, he should "rise again to Life the *third Day* after. "It is not that we are at all apprehensive "of such a wonderful and miraculous "Event, which knowing him to have "been a false Prophet as well as a deceitful Juggler, we have no Fears nor "Belief of. But as it is not long since, "that the Inhabitants in and about *Bethany* had like to have been fatally deluded and imposed on by him, in the "pretended Resuscitation of *Lazarus*, one "of his Disciples and Confederates in Iniquity; so it is not altogether impossible "nor improbable but his Disciples and "Accomplices, who are many, may project a feign'd Resurrection of *Jesus*, (in

"Ac-

" Accompliſhment of his Prediction) by " ſtealing his Body away, and pretend- " ing he is riſen from the dead. Should " ſuch a Sham-Miracle be contrived a- " mongſt them and cunningly executed it " would be πλανη (*not an Error but*) an " Impoſture of worſe Conſequence to our " Nation and Religion, than the former " in *Lazarus* could have been, if it had " never been detected: We crave there- " fore the Favour of your *Excellency*, to " give Command for the making his Se- " pulchre ſure, till the *third Day* is paſt, " that neither his *dead* Body may be ta- " ken away, and a Reſurrection pretend- " ed; nor a *living* one ſlipt into its Place, " and a Miracle counterfeited on that Day, " when we will be preſent at the opening " of the Sepulchre, and give Satisfaction " to the People of his being a falſe Pro- " phet."

Whether *Pilat* was at all intent on the Prevention of Fraud in this Caſe, or would not willingly have connived at it, to increaſe the Diviſions and Diſtractions of our then unhappy Nation, may be queſtion'd: But the Requeſt of our *Chief Prieſts* was ſo reaſonable, and their Importunitys ſo urgent, that he could not reſiſt them; and therefore order'd them a *Watch* for the

Sepulchre, which they might make as ſure, as they could, againſt Fraud and Impoſture, till the *third Day*.

Whereupon our *Chief Prieſts* deliberate, what meaſures were fitteſt to be taken to this Purpoſe. And as I can't, and don't believe any Man elſe can, deviſe any better for the ſecurity of the Sepulchre againſt Fraud, than what they took; ſo I admire and applaud their Prudence, Circumſpection, and Precaution in the Caſe. They *ſeal'd the Stone* at the mouth of the Sepulchre, and placed a Guard of Soldiers about it; which were *Two* ſuch certain means for the Prevention or Detection of Cheat in a Reſurrection, as are not to be equall'd by any other.

They *ſeal'd the Stone* of the Sepulchre, which, tho it was no Security at all againſt Violence, yet was an abſolute one againſt Fraud. How the *Stone* which fitted the Mouth of the Sepulchre, as a Door do's the Entrance into a Room, was ſeal'd, I need not deſcribe. The uſe and manner of ſealing of Doors of Cloſets, of Cheſts, and of Papers is common; and as it is an obvious Expedient, for the Satisfaction of the Signators, againſt Deceit; ſo it has been an antient as well as a modern Practice. *Nebuchadnezzar* (3)

(3) Daniel, Cap. vi. 17.

ſeal'd

ſeal'd the Door of the Den of Lions, wherein *Daniel* was caſt, with his own Signet: And wherefore did He ſo? For the Satisfaction of himſelf and of his Courtiers, when he came again to open and compare the Signature with his Signet, that no Art nor Artifice had been uſed for the Preſervation of *Daniel*. So our *Chief Prieſts* ſeal'd the Stone of *Jeſus*'s Sepulchre, which they deſign'd to be preſent at the opening of, on the *third Day*, the Time appointed by *Jeſus* for his Reſurrection, and then give ample Satisfaction to the People, that there was a real or could be no Reſurrection of his Body. Wherefore elſe did they *ſeal* the Stone of his Sepulchre?

Your *Grotius* (4) thinks, that *Pilat*'s Seal was affix'd to the Stone of the Sepulchre; but, as I believe, *Pilat* little concern'd himſelf about the Prevention of Deceit here; ſo I much queſtion it. It is more reaſonable to think that the *Chief Prieſts* and other Civil Magiſtrates of *Jeruſalem* with their ſeveral Seals, which could not be open'd but by themſelves without ſuſpicion of Fraud, ſign'd the

(4) Adducor ut credam Pilati Annulo et hunc Lapidem ſignatum. *In Loc. Matt.*

Stone, and intended to be preſent, on the Day appointed, at the opening of the Sepulchre; not doubting, what no body could queſtion, but *Jeſus* would wait their coming, and ariſe to Life if he could, in the ſight of themſelves, and of a vaſt Concourſe of People, that were ſure to attend on them to behold the Miracle. Such a Reſurrection would have been of Satisfaction to the whole Nation; and ſuch a Reſurrection, reaſonably ſpeaking, *Jeſus* would, if he could, have vouchſafed in Accommodation to the *ſealing* of the *Stone*.

But, notwithſtanding this Precaution, in ſealing of the Stone, the beſt that could be taken againſt Fraud, *Jeſus*'s Body was privately ſlipt off, early in the Morning of the Day before, and a Reſurrection pretended by his Diſciples; and you would have us and our Anceſtors to believe, there was no Deceit in the Caſe; tho confeſſedly none of the *Sealers* of the Sepulchre were preſent: Who can believe it? Was or can there be any Impoſture more againſt Senſe and Reaſon palm'd upon the Underſtandings of Mankind? If there had been a real Reſurrection, the *Sealers* of the *Stone* would have been

been the *Openers* of the Sepulchre; wherefore elſe was the *Stone ſeal'd?*

A Queſtion, that here ariſes, is, On what Day and what Time of the Day, did our *Chief Prieſts*, the Sealers of the Stone, expect, what they could not think would ever come to paſs, *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection? Or what was the Extent of the Time meant by *Jeſus*, when he ſaid that after *three Days*, or on the *third Day* after his Paſſion, he ſhould riſe again? If any Impoſtor or Prophet like *Jeſus* ſhould in this Age ſo predict his Reſurrection, and be executed on a *Fryday*, the Day for his Reſurrection would be preſumed to be *Monday*, and not *Sunday* Morning before Day. And I humbly conceive former Ages and Nations, and our Nation in particular did compute after this Faſhion. Accordingly on *Monday* our *Chief Prieſts*, I don't doubt, intended to be preſent at the opening of the Seals of the Sepulchre, and to behold the Miracle: But *Jeſus*'s Body was clandeſtinely moved off early on *Sunday*, (the Day before *that* ſignified and predicted for his Reſurrection) to the Laughter more than to the ſurprize of our Anceſtors, at the Notoriety of the Fraud committed, and at the Vanity of a Reſurrection pretended upon it. And I may

appeal,

appeal, even to your *Chief Prieſts* of the Church, whether here's not another Note of Cheat and Impoſture; and whether the Diſciples were not afraid to truſt *Jeſus*'s Body, it's full time, in the Grave; becauſe of the greater Difficulty to carry it off afterwards, and pretend a Reſurrection upon it.

But becauſe your *Divines* (who have ſingular Knacks at making two Nights and a full Day, that *Jeſus* was buried, to be *three Days* and *three Nights*; and whoſe various Ways of Computation I always ſmile at) do aſſert that *Sunday* was the *third Day*, on which, in Accompliſhment of *Jonah*'s Prophecy, and of his own Prediction, he was to riſe again; I will ſuppoſe ſo with them, and will, if they pleaſe, grant that our *Chief Prieſts*, the *Sealers* of the Sepulchre, expected his Reſurrection on that Day, and intended, for the opening of the Seals, to be preſent at it.

But at what Time of Day were they to come or could be expected at the Sepulchre? Not long before Noon. But *Jeſus*'s Body was gone betimes in the Morning, before our *Chief Prieſts* could be out of their Beds; and a barefaced Infringment of the Seals of the Sepulchre was made againſt the Laws of Honour and Honeſty,

Honeſty, and a Reſurrection confidently talk'd of by the Diſciples; and yet your Chriſtian Prieſthood at this Day would have us to believe, there was no Fraud and Deceit in all this! O moſt monſtrous!

If our *Chief Prieſts* had treſpaſs'd upon *Jeſus*'s Patience, and would not attend at the Sepulchre for the opening of the Seals, on the Day and Time appointed; if they had been for confining him longer in the Grave than was meet, according to Prophecy, then his Reſurrection, without their Preſence, had been excuſable and juſtifiable. But this his pretended Riſing to Life, not only a Day before the Chief Prieſts could imagine he would, or earlier in the Morning than he ſhould, for the Sake of their requiſite Preſence, is, together with the Fracture of the Seals againſt the Law of Security, ſuch a manifeſt and indiſputable Mark and Indication of Fraud, as is not to be equall'd in all or any of the Impoſtures, that ever were attempted to be put upon the World.

In ſhort, by the Sealing of the Stone of the Sepulchre we are to underſtand nothing leſs than a Covenant enterd into, between our *Cheif Prieſts* and the *Apoſtles*, by which *Jeſus*'s Veracity, Power and

Meſſiahſhip

Meſſiahſhip was to be try'd. Tho we read not of the Apoſtles giving their Conſent to the Covenant, yet it was reaſonably preſum'd and could not have been refus'd, if ask'd. The Condition of the ſeal'd Covenant was, that if *Jeſus* aroſe from the dead in the Preſence of our *Cheif Prieſts* upon their opening the Seals of the Sepulchre, at the Time appointed; then was he to be acknowledg'd to be the *Meſſiah:* But if he continued in a corrupt and putrified ſtate of Mortality, then was he to be granted to be an *Impoſtor:* Very wiſely and rightly agreed! And if the Apoſtles had ſtood to this Covenant, Chriſtianity had been nipt in its Bud, and ſuppreſs'd in its Birth. But they had other Views and another Game to play at all Adventures. The Body was to be removed and a Reſurrection pretended to the Deluſion, if poſſibe, of all Mankind, in which they have been more ſucceſsful than could be imagin'd upon a Project that had ſo little Senſe or Reaſon, ſo little Colour of Truth or Artifice in the Contrivance and Execution of it. Our *Cheif Prieſts* were apprehenſive at firſt of their ſtealing the Body away, and pretending a Reſurrection: But after the *ſealing* of the *Stone*, thoſe fears vaniſh'd; becauſe upon the ſtealing the Body,

Body, away againſt ſuch ſecurity and Precaution, the Fraud would be ſelf evident, and want no Demonſtration and Proof of it. But, for all this Precaution, I ſay, the Body was in a barefaced Manner taken away, a Reſurrection talk'd of, and to the Amazement of every one, who can think freely, has been beleived thro' all Ages of the Church ſince. Upon the whole then, I think, you may as well ſay, when a ſeal'd Cloſet is broken open, and the Treaſure gone without the Privity of the Signators, that there's no wrong done; as that in the Reſurrection of *Jeſus*, there was no Fraud. The Caſes are equal and parallel. What then can your Chriſtian *Prieſts* ſay to this demonſtrative Argument of a manifeſt and bare-faced Cheat in *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection? I have been thinking, what they will or can ſay; and upon the matureſt Conſideration I don't find they can make any other than one or more of theſe ſhuffling Anſwers to it, *viz.*

1. That it was impoſſible for the Diſciples to Steal the Body of *Jeſus* away, becauſe of the Watchfulneſs of the Guards; and therefore there was a real Reſurrection, tho the *Cheif Prieſts* and *Sealers* of Sepulchre were not preſent at it.

2. That tho the *Cheif Prieſts* and *Sealers* of the ſtone of the Sepulchre were not preſent, as I ſay they ought to have been, to behold the Miracle; yet his Reſurrection was afterwards made as manifeſt to them, as if they had been there preſent.

3. That if *Jeſus* did not really ariſe from the dead, the Beleif of his Reſurrection could never have been ſo propagated at firſt, nor would have been retain'd in the World for ſo many Ages ſince.

I can think of no other Anſwers, and believe it impoſſible for your Chriſtian *Prieſts* to form any other, to the foreſaid Argument of Fraud in *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection: But how weak, frivolous and inſufficient they all and every one are, will appear upon a little Examination into them.

1. Then, againſt the foreſaid demonſtrative Argument of Fraud, it may be pretended, *That it was impoſſible for the Diſciples to ſteal the Body of* Jeſus *away, becauſe of the Watchfulneſs of the Guards; and therefore there was a real Reſurrection, tho the* Cheif Prieſts, *the* Sealers *of the Sepulchre were not preſent at it.*

To

To which I reply, and confeſs, that if it was impoſſible to evade the Guards of the Sepulchre, then there was a real Reſurrection; but if there was but a bare Poſſibility of evading them, then this Anſwer is of no Force. And I am of Opinion, that the Thing was not only poſſible, but eaſy, feaſible, and practicable. Tho the *Roman* Soldiers were of as much Fidelity and Integrity as any of their Profeſſion; yet it is well known, that ſuch Creatures are ſubject to Bribery and Corruption, if the Diſciples had any Money to tempt them with: Or if their Faithfulneſs to their Truſt was untainted; yet it is not improbable, but their Officers, at the Direction of *Pilat*, who found his Account in the Diſtractions of our Nation, might give them the Hint to wink hard, at the Commiſſion of ſuch a Fraud. But not to inſiſt on either of theſe Ways to evade the *Watch*; our Anceſtors ſaid, what your *Evangeliſt* has recorded, that the Diſciples, taking the opportunity of the ſleep of the Guards, carry'd the Body of *Jeſus* off; which was a thing both poſſible and probable.

Of what Number the *Watch* did conſiſt is uncertain. Your *Whitly* (5) ſays they

(5) *Upon the Place in* Matthew.

were *ſixty*; but he has no Reaſon nor Authority to think, they were ſo many. If they had been to be a Guard againſt Violence, I ſhould eaſily have believed they were more; but in as much as they were only a *Watch* againſt Fraud, and againſt any caſual defaceing of the *Seals* on the Stone, before the *Cheif Prieſts* came to open the Sepulchre, *three* or *four* Soldiers were ſufficient, and I don't think, there were any more ſet to this Purpoſe.

It is not then at all improbable, that ſo few Soldiers ſhould be faſt aſleep at that time of Night, or ſo early in the Morning, when the clandeſtine Work was done; eſpecially after keeping ſuch a *Gaudy day*, as was the Feaſt of the Paſſover, which, like the Feſtivals of other Nations, was celebrated with Exceſs. Foot Soldiers then, you may be ſure, upon the Bounty of one or other did no more want, than they would ſcruple to take their *Fill*, which like an Opiat lock'd up their Senſes for that Night, when the Diſciples, being aware of the lucky opportunity, carry'd the Body of *Jeſus* off ſafely.

And where's the Abſurdity to ſuppoſe, that the Diſciples themſelves might contrive the Intoxication of the Guards? *Herodotus* tells us a Story of a dead-Body's

Body's being ſtolen away by ſuch an Artifice. And I don't think the Diſciples of *Jeſus* either ſo fooliſh or conſcientious as not to take the Hint and enterpriſe the like Fraud. *Peter*, who upon occaſion, could *ſwear* and *curſe* like a *Trooper*, would hardly ſcruple to fuddle a few *Foot-Soldiers*. But which way ſoever it came to paſs, the Watch were aſleep, which is neither hard to conceive nor believe; and then the Diſciples executed *that* Fraud, which has been the Deluſion of Nations and Ages ſince.

Your *Evangeliſts* would hint that the *Cheif Prieſts* gave Money to the Soldiers to ſay, they were aſleep, when the Diſciples ſtole the Body of *Jeſus* away, as if they were brib'd to a falſe Teſtimony; but there neither was nor could be any ſuch Thing. If there had been a real Reſurrection to their Aſtoniſhment and Amazement, as it is repreſented in your Goſpels, no Money could ſo ſoon have corrupted them to a falſe Witneſs, being under ſuch Fears of God and of *Jeſus*. I don't doubt but our *Cheif Prieſts* might reward the Soldiers for ſpeaking the Truth, and exhort them to perſiſt in it, with a Promiſe to *ſecure* them againſt

againſt the Anger of *Pilat* for their ſleeping and neglect of their Duty.

Here then is no *Anſwer* to the foreſaid Argument or Objection againſt *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection. It was not at all impoſſible for the Diſciples, who ſtole the Body away, to avoid the Guards, who were and may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to be lull'd aſleep, when the Diſciples did it. Neither is there any more Force in the

2. Second Anſwer to it, *viz. That tho the Cheif Prieſts, the ſealers of the Stone of ths Sepulchre, were not preſent, opening the Seals and beholding the Miracle; yet his Reſurrection was afterwards as manifeſt to them, as if they had been there preſent.*

Ay, this is ſomewhat like an Anſwer, if there be any Truth in it. A Manifeſtation of *Chriſt riſen* afterwards to our *Cheif Prieſts* would have been equivalent to their Preſence at, and ſight of the Miracle. But how was his Reſurrection manifeſted to them? did *Jeſus* ever afterwards appear perſonally to them, to their ſatisfaction, that he was the ſame Perſon, whom they crucified and put to Death for a Deceiver and falſe Prophet? No; this is not once aſſerted by your *Evangeliſts* or ever inſinuated by any antient or modern Writer. How then was *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection made

manifeſt

manifeſt to our Cheif Prieſts? Why; your *Divines* ſay, what is all that can be ſaid here, that the Words of the Diſciples, who, being Men of Honeſty, Simplicity and Integrity, would not Lye, are to be taken for it. Very fine indeed! our Cheif Prieſts are to take the Words of the Diſciples for *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection, and look upon them as Men of Veracity, when they knew and experienc'd them to be grand Cheats, not only in Stealing the Body of *Jeſus* away, but in the *known Impoſture* of *Lazarus*'s Reſurrection, or your *Evangeliſt* had never implicitly called it ſo. When therefore Deceivers will not be *Lyers*; nor Theives, *Diſſemblers* of the Fact, they are accuſed of, I will own *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection to have been manifeſt enough to our *Cheif Prieſts*. There's no Need of more Argument here; He that beſtows more Words on it, loſes Time.

It has been a Conſtant Objection of us *Jews* againſt the Reſurrection of *Jeſus*, that he appear'd not perſonally afterwards to our *Cheif Prieſts*, to *Pilat* and to others his Crucifiers and Inſultors, to upbraid them with their Infidelity and ill Treatment of him. Whether *Jeſus* would not have done ſo, if he really aroſe from the dead; and whether he ought not in Reaſon, for the Conviction and Converſion of Unbe-

Unbeleivers, to have done ſo, with me is no Queſtion. *Celſus* of old (6) in the Name of the *Jews* made the Objection; and *Olibio*, a late *Rabbi* (7) has repeated it. But in all my Reading and Converſation with Men or Books I never met with a tolerable Anſwer to it. *Origen* and *Limborch*, the Writers againſt *Celſus* and *Olibio*, gently ſlide over the Objection, as if it was too hot or weighty to be touch'd and handled by them. To recite the poor, ſhort and inſufficient Anſwers of thoſe two great Authors, to the Objection, would be the Expoſing of them, and giving ſuch Strength to the Objection, which it don't want. Therefore I will leave the Objection, which *Origen* (8) owns to be a conſiderable one, to the Meditation of your modern Advocates for Chriſtianity; and when they can prove, that *Jeſus* after his Reſurrection did perſonally appear to his Crucifiers, the *Cheif*

(6) Si Jeſus volebat revera declarare ſuam divinam Potentiam, debuerat ſuis Inſultatoribus, ipſiq; Præſidi qui capitalem ſententiam contra ſe tulerat, denique cæteris omnibus ſe oſtendere. *In Orig. Lib.* ii. *contra Celſum.*

(7) In Limborchii Amica Collatione cum Judæo.

(8) Magna Sane Res et miranda occurrit hoc loco, quæ non Solum aliquem ex vulgo Credentium exercere poſſet, Sed perfectiores etiam; cur non Dominus poſt Reſurrectionem æque ac ſuperioribus temporibus conſpiciendum ſe præbuerit. *In Lib.* ii. cont. *Celſum.*

Prieſts

Prieſts and *Sealers* of the Sepulchre, to their Confutation; or that, according to the Law of Reaſon, he ought not to have appear'd to them, then I will turn *Chriſtian*, and grant that in the Argument above, which proves plain Fraud in the Reſurrection, there's no Force nor Truth. In the mean time *Jeſus*'s Non-Appearance to the *Cheif Prieſts* is a Confirmation, that he did not ariſe from the Dead, but that his Body was ſtolen away, or he would have waited in the Grave, the coming of the Sealers of the Stone, and their regular opening of the Sepulchre, to the Conviction and Converſion of all there preſent and Confirmation of the Faith of all Ages and Nations ſince. But,

3. A third Anſwer to the foreſaid Argument of Fraud in the Reſurrection of *Jeſus*, drawn from the Nature, Uſe and Deſign of ſealing the Stone of the Sepulchre, is, *that tho the* Sealers *of the Sepulchre were not preſent, opening the Seals and beholding the Miracle*; *yet* Jeſus *did certainly ariſe from the Dead, or the Belief of his Reſurrection could never have been at firſt propagated by the Apoſtles, nor would for ſo many Ages of the Church ſince have ſtood its Ground.*

Here's as little Reaſon in this Anſwer as in either of the two former. Who knows not, that many Errors in Philoſophy, and as many Frauds in Religion have been ſometimes accidentally, ſometimes deſignedly eſpous'd and palm'd upon Mankind, who in Proceſs of Time become ſo wedded to them thro' Prejudice and Intereſt, that they will not give themſelves Leave to enquire into the Riſe and Foundation of them. Falſe Miracles have been common Things among Chriſtians; and as the Reſurrection of *Jeſus* is their grand and fundamental one, ſo it is not at all difficult to account for the Riſe, Propagation and Continuance of the Belief of it.

Why it has been believed thro' theſe latter Ages of the Church, is no Wonder at all. The Prieſts had their Intereſt in it; the ignorant and ſuperſtitious had their Comfort in it; and the wiſe and conſiderate, for Fear of Perſecution, durſt not enquire into the Grounds of it.

The only difficulty here is to know, upon what Principle, the Project and Story of *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection was at firſt deviſed. And whether it was Ambition or Revenge upon our ancient and phariſaical Prieſthood, that prompted the Apoſtles to it, is all one to me. Such bad Prin-

Principles too often put Men upon desperate Attempts. But however, an Impoſture it was, for the Argument above. To ſay, the Apoſtles and Confederates in the Fraud would not have ſtood to it, and have dy'd for it, if the Reſurrection had not been real Fact, ſignifies nothing. Many Cheats and Criminals, beſides them, have aſſerted their Innocency, and deny'd their Guilt in the utmoſt extremity of Death, without the like Views of Honour and Fame. The only Thing, that's ſurpriſing and aſtoniſhing in this Sham-Miracle, is that, tho it was the moſt manifeſt, the moſt barefaced, and the moſt ſelf evident Impoſture that ever was put upon the World; yet it has been the moſt fortunate and ſucceſsful, having paſt thro' many Ages and Nations with Reputation and Renown; and might have continued for as many Generations to come, but for the Argument above, that perfectly and clearly overthrows its Credit.

But, ſome may ſay here, where was the Wiſdom and Providence of God, all this while, to ſuffer ſo many Ages and Nations to labour under ſuch a Deluſion? Why, I'll tell you; The Providence of God in it was, "To humble Mankind, in the End, for their vain

Oſtentation of Wiſdom, Learning and *Science falſly ſo call'd*; " To ſhame them for their Madneſs and Wickedneſs to perſecute one another for different Opinions in that Religion, whoſe very Foundation is falſe and groundleſs; " To caution them againſt a blind and implicit Faith for the future; againſt believing any thing out of the ſight and reach of their Underſtandings; " To admoniſh them of the neceſſity of Liberty to think, ſpeak and write freely about Religion, for the Correction of Errors and Diſcovery of Truth; and laſtly, " To reduce the World when it ſhould be ripe for it, to the golden Religion of Nature, which upon the Teſtimony of our old *Cabaliſtical* Doctors, and of your *Jeſus* himſelf, is the *End of the Law and the Prophets*.

And thus have I ſpoken to the *Anſwers*, which your *Chriſtian Prieſthood* may be preſumed to make, to the foreſaid Argument of Fraud in *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection, drawn from the Deſign of our *Cheif Prieſts* in ſealing of the Stone of his Sepulchre. I ſhould not have concern'd myſelf to ſpeak to theſe their ſuppoſed *Anſwers*, but to ſave them the Trouble of making them, and the Imagination of there being ſome Force in them.

As

As to the Stories, in your *Evangeliſts*, of *Jeſus*'s ſeveral Appearances after his pretended Reſurrection, ſometimes to the Women, and at other Times to his Diſciples, I am not at all obliged to refute them. If theſe Appearances had been more frequent, better circumſtanced, and more ſolemnly averr'd, they would have wanted no Confutation. There's no doubt on't, but the Diſciples, who, for the Argument above, unqueſtionably ſtole *Jeſus*'s Body away, in order to pretend a Reſurrection, would talk much of his appearing to them, and of the Converſation afterwards, they had with him. And if they had told better and more plauſible Tales of their ſight of, and Converſation with him, it would be nothing to the Purpoſe; *better*, I ſay, *and more plauſible Tales* than thoſe upon Record, which for Abſurdity, Nonſenſe and Incoherence carry their own Confutation along with them.

Whoever blends together the various Hiſtory of the four *Evangeliſts*, as to *Jeſus*'s Appearances after his Reſurrection, will find himſelf, not only perplex'd how to make an intelligible, conſiſtent, and ſenſible Story of it; but muſt; with *Celſus* (9),

(9) Quamvis Celſus has Jeſu poſt Reſurrectionem Apparitiones conferre conetur cum vulgaribus Spectris & Viſionibus. *In Origen. Lib.* ii. *contra Celſum.*

needs

needs think it, if he closely think on't, like some of the confused and incredible womanish Fables of the Apparitions of the Ghosts of deceased Persons, which the Christian World in particular has in former Ages abounded with. The Ghosts of the Dead in this present Age, and especially in this Protestant Country have ceas'd to appear; and we now-a-days hardly ever hear of such an Apparition: And what is the Reason of it? Why, the Beleif of these Storys being banish'd out of Men's Minds, the crafty and vaporous forbear to trump them upon us. There has been so much clear Proof of Fraud in many of these Storys, that the wise and considerate Part of Mankind has rejected them all, excepting *this* of *Jesus*, which to Admiration has stood its Ground. It's no wonder indeed, that the *Clergy*, who are more incredulous than other Folks as to Storys of Apparitions, do stick to *this* of *Jesus*, the only one excepted out of all others. It is a sweet morsel of Faith, and they readily swallow and digest it, because they live by it; otherwise *this* Story of *Jesus*'s Appearances after Death had hardly escaped the Fate of other Apparitions; nay, would have been rejected, one of the first of them; there being hardly one, I dare say it, among all the Storys of

Appa-

Apparitions, were they to be collected together ; that's more abſurd and incredible than *this* of *Jeſus*.

I have not here Room to make any Remarks on your Evangelical Story of *Jeſus*'s Apparitions after his Death ; and if I had, I durſt not do it, for fear of an offenſive Ludicrouſneſs, and of tranſgreſſing the Rules of *Decency*, *Sobriety* and *Sedateneſs* of Argument, you have confined me to. But however, I can't read the Story without ſmiling, and there are two or three Paſſages in it, that put me in mind of *Robinſon Cruſo*'s filling his Pockets with Biskets, when he had neither Coat, Waſtcoat nor Breeches on. Sometimes I think your *Evangeliſts* wanted Wit to adapt their Tale to Senſe, and to accommodate the Tranſaction to Nature ; and ſometimes I think them crafty, and were minded, like *Daniel de Foe* in his foreſaid *Romance*, to put the Banter upon the Credulity of Mankind, with ſome diſguiſed and latent Abſurdities, that, in the Concluſion and Diſcovery, they might be heartily laugh'd at for the Belief of them, I dare not, I ſay, ſo much a hint at one of theſe Abſurdities, leaſt I ſhould be unwarily tempted to crack a Jeſt on it. But the Time, I hope, is coming, when I ſhall uſe more Freedom. And ſhould your Prieſthood

Prieſthood, in Proof of *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection, urge any of theſe Storys of his corporal Preſence and Appearance after it, then I truſt, they'll permit me to to make as merry Deſcants on them, as your *Biſhops*, when Academical *Jeſters*, uſed to do on other Men's Bulls and Blunders.

In the mean time I depend on the foregoing ſingle, ſober and ſedate Argument of Fraud in this grand Miracle, which I found on the Nature and Deſign of ſealing the Sepulchre; and for Confirmation of my Opinion and Proof of Fraud in it, will conclude this Letter with a parallel Caſe and Story, Not many Years ſince, one Dr. *Emms*, of the Society of the French Prophets, who in their Inſpirations were, like *Jeſus* and his Diſciples of old, Declaimers againſt the Phariſaical Prieſthood of this Age, did by himſelf, or ſome of his Fraternity did for him, predict his Reſurrection on a certain Day, when there was a Concourſe of People about his Grave in vain to behold the Miracle, as there would have been about *Jeſus*'s Sepulchre, if he had lain in it, his full Time. But ſuppoſing in this Caſe, that the Magiſtrates and Prieſthood of this City, to prevent a Cheat and Deluſion of the People, had interr'd the

Doctor

Doctor in a Church-Vault, and seal'd the Door of it against the Day appointed for his Resurrection, commanding a *Night-Watch* to look to the Vault that no Violence or Deceit be used: This would have been a wise Precaution against Fraud, as was in the Case of *Jesus*. But what if his Fraternity, having a Mind, like *Jesus*'s Disciples to bambouzle the People and Priesthood, had, some of them drawn the Watch aside to a *Gin-shop*, whilst others carry'd the Body off, pretending a Resurrection? What would all reasonable Men have said here? That it was an impudent and bare-faced Imposture. But to carry on the Farce; supposing, the *Doctor*'s Fraternity had afterwards averr'd that they had seen and convers'd with him alive, several Times, as before his Death; and had told particular Storys of their Conversation with him; as *first* of all, how he appear'd to some of their Women (who were admonish'd of the Certainty of his Resurrection by a Youth or an Angel or two, they could not tell whether, but they were as like to Angels, which they never saw before in their Lives, as Youths could be) who knew him, not by his Countenance, for *their Eyes were holden*, as by his Talk on Scripture-Prophecy, which was his usual Cant before his

Death. And at another Time he appear'd to his old Acquaintance, who knew him, not by the Features of his Face, but by an habitual Motion and Action of his Hand in *breaking of Bread*. And at another Time he was corporally present, but *they thought, they saw a Spirit*. About *eight Days after that*, he appear'd among more of his old Friends, but for all their former Intimacy with him, some of them *doubted* whether it was the *Doctor* or not. At another Time he came to them in *another Form* and Shape, unlike to his pristin one, but they were sure it was *He* by his Exposition of the Scripture. At another Time, when they were assembled together and the Doors were lock'd *for fear of the Clergy*, the *Doctor* slipt unexpectedly into their Company, either from behind a Curtain, or miraculously enter'd at the Key-hold. And the last Time he appear'd, there was one of his intimate Friends had not known him, but by a *Sore* in his Breast, which the Power of God in his Resurrection did not heal: After which, they said, he *vanish'd away, was taken up into Heaven*, and they saw him no more. Supposing, I say, the *French* Prophets had told such like Storys of *Doctor Emms*'s Resurrection, and of his Appearances to them; what would

your

your Priests and all other wise Men have said to it? Why, that it was all idle Tales, manifest Lyes, Sham, and Imposture; and that if the *Doctor*, in Confutation of the Errors of your Priests, had risen to Life, God would have kept him in his Sepulchre, his full time, and have rais'd him in the Presence of Priests, Magistrates and People; and that he would have walk'd afterwards publickly in the Streets without Danger, to the Satisfaction of all, who knew him, that he was the same *Emms* who died and was bury'd: *Without Danger*, I say, from the Populace, who would have been so far from affronting him, that they would have almost adored him for the miraculous Favour, God had done him in his Resurrection from the dead; and that he would never have skulk'd about and absconded himself for *forty Days* together, before he was pretendedly translated; and therefore there was nothing but notorious Deceit and Imposture in all these Pretences.

I need not make the Application of this Case and Story, which your *Priests* know how to do for me. To say here, that there's none would be so desperate to engage in such a Fraud, as is the supposed Case of Dr. *Emms* above, is a mistake.

Many Thouſands for their Diverſion would enterpriſe it; and the Storys of the Apparitions of Ghoſts, which are almoſt all the Frauds of the Crafty to delude the ignorant, do prove it. I my ſelf would be forward to concert ſuch an Intrigue, if it was but to put the Banter upon the *Clergy*, to ruffle their Tempers, and ſecretly to laugh at them. Nothing would deter me from it, but fears of the Civil Magiſtrate, which was not the Danger of the Diſciples of *Jeſus*; becauſe *Pilat*, for the ſake of Rule over the *Jews*, was a Countenancer of every Faction amongſt them; and particularly (10) *Tiberius*, upon *Pilat*'s Repreſentation of the matter, ſoon commanded that the Diſciples of *Jeſus* ſhould not be moleſted, nor call'd into Queſtion: So the Diſciples ſtood to the Fraud, told the Story of *Jeſus riſen* ſo often, till they believed it themſelves, and drew Multitudes into the Belief of it: Which Belief muſt have continued thro' all Generations to come, but for my Argument of Fraud, before urg'd and argued.

Here, Sir, before I conclude this Letter, I think it my Duty however to give

(10) Comminatus eſt Periculum Accuſatoribus Chriſtianorum. *Tertul. Apol Cap.* v.

you

you may Opinion of the Religion, that *Jesus* and his Disciples were for introducing into the World. Tho I beleive, what I have proved, his Resurrection to be a Piece of Fraud, and his other Miracles to have been all Artifice; and tho our *Cheif Priests* and ancient Nation are justifiable in the Sentence, that was pass'd and executed upon *Jesus*; yet I must do him and his Disciples the Justice, to own, that the Doctrine they taught was for the most Part of it, good, useful and popular, being no other than the Law and Religion of Nature, which, all Nations being wearied with their own Superstitions, and sick of the Burthen of their Priests, ran apace into. Accordingly one (11) of your ancient Fathers says, that they *who lived according to the Law of Nature, were true Christians.* And I must needs say, that if Christians, in Process of Time, had not sophisticated this primitive Religion of *Jesus*; If they had not built their systematical Divinity upon him, and brought strange Inventions of Men into his Worship; If lastly, they had not again subjugated and entangled themselves with another and worse Yoke of Bondage to an intolerable and tyrannical

(11) Justin Martyr. *In Apol.* ii.

Priest-

Prieſthood of the Church, the World might have enjoy'd great Happineſs under *Jeſus*'s Religion, even *that Happineſs* which is now only to be expected upon a Diſproof of his miraculous Reſurrection, that has been the Foundation of a moſt confuſed Superſtructure of wild Doctrines and Opinions: Or more truely ſpeaking, *That Happineſs* of the ſtate of Nature, Religion and Liberty, which may be look'd for upon the coming of our *Meſſiah*, the allegorical Accompliſher of the Law and the Prophets; whoſe Advent, upon the Tradition of our *Cabaliſts*, will be toward the latter End of the *Sixth* grand Age of the Creation, to remove from our Faces and our Hearts the Vail of the Letter; and in the mean while I adhere to the umbratical Rites, Ceremonies and way of Worſhip, derived from our Forefathers.

Thus, Sir, have I finiſh'd my *Letter* on *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection; and whether I have not ſaid enough to juſtify our *Jewiſh* Disbeleif of that Miracle, let your *Cheif Prieſts* judge. I don't expect my Argument againſt it will be convincing of any of your Preachers. They have a potent Reaſon for their Faith, which we *Jews* can't come at; or I don't know, but we might believe with them.

I truſt

I truſt you'll meet with no Moleſtation for the Publication of this *Letter*; neither do I think, it was any thing of mine, inſerted in your Diſcourſes, that at any time brought Trouble on you. It was your own Imprudence to rave, as you do, againſt *Eccleſiaſticks*. What need had you to talk of the Miſcheifs and Inconveniences of an Hireling Prieſthood? What occaſion had you to call them Eccleſiaſtical Virmin, and to ſpeak of the Happineſs of Mankind upon their Extinction? Theſe things are very provoking. And here's the true Sourſe, in my Opinion, of all your Troubles!

Tho I have here ſhewn, that *Chriſt is not riſen*, yet I have more Wit than to make the Inference of *Paul*, that *their Preaching is vain*. Their Oratory is ſtill uſeful, if it be but to tickle the Ears and amuſe the Underſtandings of the People about Doctrines they underſtand not, whether true or falſe. And ſuch an order of Men, as are your Prieſtood, are, by their Habit of long Robes, an Ornament to Society; and it is an Honour to the Country to have them well fed and clad. Had I Room for it, I could write a curious *Encomium* in Praiſe of them, and tell the World of what Uſe and Advantage, they have been, in all Ages. O what

what Wars and Perſecutions might have been rais'd in the World, but for their pacifick Tempers! How would Sin and Immorality have broke in upon Mankind, like a Deluge, but for the Goodneſs of their Lives and the Excellency of their Precepts! How has the Increaſe and Multitude of their warm Sermons been the Ruin of *Satan*'s hot and divided Kingdom of Darkneſs and Error! Its owing to their Pains and Labours, that every Age, for many paſt, has been improving in Virtue, till the preſent, which for Piety and good Morals is that Perfection of Time, which is not to be meliorated but by the Reſtitution of the golden Age.

So could I enlarge in Praiſe of your *Clergy*; and ſo ſhould you have done; and then you might have diſputed, as you do, againſt any Doctrines, Miracles and Articles of Faith, without Moleſtation. Try, if you can't correct that fundamental Error, you have committed. Aſſert ſtill, if you can, with Dr. *Rogers* the Neceſſity of an eſtabliſh'd Prieſthood, well paid, for the Service of the *King* and the Country, under all Changes of Religion; which may be a means to retrieve their Favour, and will beget in me a better opinion of your Prudence, than at preſent

preſent is entertain'd by your *Aſſured Friend* N. N.

So ends the Letter of my Friend, the *Jewiſh Rabbi*, in which to my Comfort, he has conform'd himſelf to the Rules of *Sedateneſs*, *Decency* and *Sobriety* of Argument, preſcrib'd by the two great *Biſhops* of *London* and St. *Davids*. If the weight and ſolidity of his Argument don't grieve the *Clergy*, I am in no Pain for the Levity and Ludicrouſneſs of it. And whether the weight and nature of his Argument againſt *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection will at all ſtartle and ſurpriſe them, I know not; but I profeſs for my ſelf, that I might have ſtudy'd long enough for ſuch an Argument againſt it, as this *Rabbi*, with his great gray Beard, has preſently hit off. He told me beforehand, that his Thoughts on *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection ſhould be out of the common Road of thinking; and I muſt needs ſay, he has been as good as his Word, or no Man ever kept his Promiſe.

There are two Things very remarkable in his Argument: The *One* is, the Uſe and Deſign of ſealing the Stone of *Jeſus*'s Sepulchre, which he lays great ſtreſs on, to the Proof of Fraud in his Reſurrection; and the *other* is, his Application of theſe Words, *the laſt Error* (or

as he reads Deceit or Impoſture) *will be worſe than the firſt* or former, in which he makes the *Cheif Prieſts* in their Speech to *Pilat*, to refer to *Lazarus*'s Reſurrection as the former known Impoſture. If his Application be juſt and true, the Conſequence is that the Reſurrections of *Jeſus* and *Lazarus* are both Impoſtures. It grieves me to the Heart to think of this Conſequence, which our *Divines* are to ſee to, and evade, if they can. No ſooner did I read his Application of the foreſaid Words, but I run to our *Commentators* for another and better Expoſition of them: But alas! to my Sorrow, they made nothing of them, but a ſort of a *proverbial Expreſſion*, which the *Cheif Prieſts* muſt have ſpoil'd and knock'd out of Joint. Being then under great Trouble for the Truth of Chriſtianity and the Certainty of theſe two grand Miracles, I refer the matter to our Learned *Clergy*, deſiring them to be as ſpeedy as they can in another and more proper Interpretation of the foreſaid Words, or *Jews* and *Infidels* will run away with them in the *Rabbi*'s Senſe, to the Confutation of our holy Religion.

I conſider'd lately, that *Eaſter* drew nigh, when it was uſual for our *Divines* in

in their Pulpits, to insist on the Proof of *Jesus*'s Resurrection; and therefore I hasten'd the Publication of this *Discourse*, that they might have these two peculiar Texts, *viz.* of *sealing the Stone* of the Sepulchre, and of *the last Error* or Imposture *will be worse than the first*, to treat on. He that produces a Sermon or Sermons, wresting the foresaid Texts out of the Hands of my *Rabbi*, and putting another Sense on them, to the Credit of *Jesus*'s and *Lazarus*'s Resurrection,

Erit mihi magnus Apollo

and by my Consent shall be the next *Arch-Bishop* of *Canterbury*.

But my Heart akes a little for our *Divines*, and I almost despair of their clean Solutions of the foresaid two Difficultys. What must they do then? Why, they must give up their *Religion* as well as their *Church*, or go along with me to Fathers for their mystical Interpretation of the whole Story of *Jesus*'s Resurrection.

That the Fathers, without questioning their Belief of *Jesus*'s corporal Resurrection, universally interpreted the Story and every part of it mystically, is

moſt certain. St. *Hilary* (12) enumerates many Particulars of the Story, and intimates what they are typical and figurative of, as any one may ſee by the Citation referr'd to, which I have not Room to tranſlate and illuſtrate.

St. *Auguſtin* (13) ſays, that *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection from the dead at that Time, was

(12) Quod autem a Joſeph rogato Pilato ut Corpus redderet & ſindone involvitur, & in Monumento novo in Petra exciſa reponitur, & Saxum Oſtio Monumenti advolvitur: Quanquam ſit Ordo Geſtorum, & ſepeliri eum erat neceſſe, qui reſurrecturus erat a mortuis; tamen non ſine Rerum aliquarum Momento expreſſa ſunt ſingula. Joſeph Apoſtolorum habet ſpeciem: & idcirco quanquam in duodecem numero Apoſtolorum non fuerit, Diſcipulus Domini nuncupatur. Hic munda ſindone corpus involvit; & quidem in hoc eodem linteo reperimus de cælo ad Petrum univerſorum Animantium genera ſummiſſa. Ex quo forte non ſuperflue intelligitur ſub lintei hujus nomine conſepeliri Chriſto Eccleſiam: quia tum in eo, ut in Confuſione Eccleſiæ mundorum atque immundorum Animalium fuerit congeſta diverſitas. Domini igitur Corpus tarquam per Apoſtolorum doctrinam in vacuam & novam requiem Lapidis exciſi, *viz.* in pectus duritiæ Gentilis quodam doctrinæ opere exciſum Chriſtus infertur, rude ſcilicet & novum, & nullo antea ingreſſu timoris Dei pervium. Et quia nihil præter eum oporteat in pectora noſtra penetrare Lapis Oſtio advolvitur: ut quia nullus antea in nos divinæ Cognitionis Auctor fuerat illatus, nullus abſque eo poſtea inferatur. Metus deinde furandi Corporis, & Sepulchri Cuſtodia atque Obſignatio, Stultitiæ atque Infidelitatis Teſtimonium eſt; quod ſignare Sepulchrum ejus voluerint, cujus præcepto conſpexiſſent de Sepulchro mortuum ſuſcitatum. *In Loc. Mat.*

(13) Ad hoc enim Dominus hodie reſurrexit, ut Imaginem nobis futuræ Reſurrectionis oſtenderet. *In Serm.* clxviii. *Append.*

to

to exhibit an Image and Reſemblance of his future and myſtical Reſurrection. And elſewhere ſays (14) that its a holy Pleaſure to conſider and ſearch for the things ſignified by the Story of it.

That *Origen* is of the ſame Opinion, no body need queſtion. A multitude of his Teſtimonies might be produced to this Purpoſe, but I ſhall mention only one (15), wherein he aſſerts, that by the Sepulchre of *Jeſus*, is to be underſtood the *Letter* of the Scriptures, in which, as in a Rock, he is repoſited.

St. *John* of *Jeraſalem* (16) by the Crucifiers of *Jeſus* underſtands falſe Teachers, meaning *Miniſters* of the *Letter* to be ſure, becauſe he himſelf was a great Allegoriſt.

(14) Quid ſingula ſignificent, quærere ſanctæ quidem Deliciæ ſunt. *In Johan. Evang. C.* xx. *Tract.* 120.

(15) Monumentum Chriſti eſt divina Scriptura, in qua Divinitatis & Humanitatis ejus myſteria denſitate Litteræ, veluti quadam muniuntur Petra. *In Diverſos Homil.* 2.

(16) Ne putes, tunc ſolummodo traditus eſt Chriſtus Principibus Sacerdotibus & Scribis.—— Quando enim vides Scripturas Prophetarum & Evangelii & Apoſtolorum traditas eſſe in Manus fulſorum Sacerdotum & Scribarum; num intelliges quia Verbum Veritatis traditum eſt Principibus iniquis & ſcribis. *In Mat. C.* xx.

St,

St. *Hilary* says that (17) *Barabbas* is a Type of *Anti-Christ*; and by *Anti-Christ*, as I have elsewhere shewn out of the Fathers, is meant the *Letter* of the Scriptures, which modern Commentators and Crucifiers of *Jesus* would prefer to the Spirit. For these are the two, *Letter* and Spirit, the *Christ* and *Anti-Christ*, that are contrary one to another.

St. *Jerome* (18) says, that by the *Vail* of the *Temple*, rent at *Jesus*'s Resurrection, is to be understood the opening the *Vail* of the *Letter* of the Law and the Prophets for the Manifestation of the divine Mysterys contain'd in them. And by the rending of the Rocks according (19) to him is to be understood the Apertion of the Oracles of God, that were before as hard as a Rock, till his spiritual Resurrection for the Illustration of them. And by the Earth-

(17) Interpretatio autem Nominis Barabbæ est Patris filius: Jam itaque Arcanum Infidelitatis futuræ ostenditur, Christo Patris filium præferendo, Anti Christum scilicet hominem Peccati & Diaboli filium, potiusq; adhortantibus principibus suis eligunt, Damnationi reservatum, quam Salutis Authorem. *In Loc. Mat.*

(18) Velum Templi scissum est, & omnia Legis Sacramenta, quæ prius tegebantur, prodita sunt atque ad Gentium Populum translerunt. *In Loc. Mat.*

(19) Petræ Scissæ, id est, universa Vaticinia Prophetarum. *In Epist. ad Hedibriam.*

quake,

quake, He (20) says is meant the Shakeing of the Hearts of Men, and preparing them, by a Dereliction of their old Errors, for the susception of the true Knowledge of God.

As to the Time that *Jesus* was dead and bury'd, which modern *Divines* call *three Days* and *three Nights*, St. *Augustin* says (21) that according to the Scripture he was not so long dead and buried. Many, says (22) he, have put various Constructions on the Time of *Christ*'s burial, endeavouring to make three Days of it: But we without slighting any of their opinions, are for a mystical Interpretation, and suppose, that by the three Days are to be understood three Ages of the World.

The Day would fail me to collect all the Passages out of the Fathers, in Interpretation of one or other of the Parts

(20) Sed mihi videtur Terræ Motus & reliqua typum ferre credentium, quod pristinis Erroum vitiis derelictis, & Cordis emollita duritia, postea agnoverint Creatorem. *In Loc. Matt.*

(21) Ipsum autem tridurum, non totum & plenum fuisse Scriptura testis est. *In Lib.* iv. *de Trinitate. Sect.* 10.

(22) De tribus diebus, multi sancti multa hinc senserint atque dixerint.——Sed nos neutram eorum vacantes sententiam; melius tamen, si placet in his spiritalem requiramus Intellectum, tres dies tria Tempora Sæculi ponentes. *In Sermon. de Symbolo.*

of

of the ſtory of *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection, but what I have here ſaid in a few Citations, is enough to ſhow, that they look'd upon the whole Story, as emblematical of his ſpiritual Reſurrection out of the *Grave* of the *Letter* of the Scriptures, in which he has been bury'd about *three Days* and *three Nights*, according to that myſtical Interpretation of prophetical Numbers which I have learn'd of them.

And thus have I done with the Miracle of *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection, which, by the help of my Friend the Jewiſh *Rabbi*, I have ſhown, according to the Letter, to conſiſt of the greateſt Incredibilitys. And with this I conclude my *Diſcourſes* on his Miracles, intending to treat on no more of them, unleſs I am invited or provoked to it. I had once an Inclination to make another *Diſcourſe* on *Jeſus*'s miraculous Conception, and on his feeding his Thouſands, in the Wilderneſs with a few Loaves and Fiſhes; but upon a little Conſideration on the Letter of thoſe two Storys, I found myſelf too grave for the Work; and my *Rabbi*'s Thoughts are too gay and wonton; therefore it muſt be omitted, till the *Clergy* importune me to it, and ſignify their Curioſity to ſee it perform'd by me.

My

My Diſcourſes hereafter, if God ſpare me Life and Liberty, which under his Providence I don't deſpair of, to publiſh another Volume, ſhall treat on ſome hiſtorical Paſſages of the New Teſtament, ſuch as, " On the Storys of *Jeſus*'s Birth; and the Appearances of Angels to the Shepherds keeping Watch over their Flocks by Night; " The Journey and Preſents of the Wiſe Men to *Jeſus*; " The Slaughter of the Innocents at *Bethlehem*, and of *Herods* Cruelty; " The Travels of *Joſeph* with the Child *Jeſus* and his Mother into *Egypt*; " The Diſputation of *Jeſus* with the *Doctors* in the Temple, and his Elopement from his Parents; " His riding on an Aſs to *Jeruſalem*; and on other ſuch like Paſſages of his Life. For I am reſolv'd to give the Letter of the Scripture no Reſt, ſo long as God gives me Life and Abilities to attack it. *Origen* (23) ſays that *when we diſpute againſt Miniſters of the Letter, we muſt ſelect ſome hiſtorical Parts of Scripture, which they underſtand litterally, and ſhew that according to the Letter, they can't ſtand*

(23) Cum diſputamus adverſus eos, & cum conquirimus advicem, tunc quærimus logum Dogmatis illius in littera Legis Hiſtoriæ, & oſtenditur ſecundum Hiſtoriam ſtare non poſſe. *In Pſal.* xxxvi.

their Ground, but imply Abſurditys and Nonſence. And how then is ſuch a Work to be perform'd to beſt Advantage? Is it to be done in a grave, ſedate, and ſerious Manner? No, I think Ridicule ſhould here take Place of ſober Reaſoning, as the more proper and effectual means to cure Men of their fooliſh Faith and abſurd Notions. As no wiſe Man hardly ever reprehends a Blunderbuſs for his Bull, any other way, than by laughing at him; ſo the Aſſerters of nonſenſical Notions in Theology ſhould, if poſſible, be ſatiriſed and jeſted upon, or they'll never be put out of Countenance for, nor deſert their abſurd Doctrines. And there never was a Polemical Divine, that, if he had an opportunity and Advantage over the Weakneſs of his Adverſary, did not take ſuch a ludicrous and merry Courſe with him.

But on ſuch hiſtorical Paſſages of the Goſpel as before mention'd, do I truſt to publiſh another Volume of *Diſcourſes*, like to theſe on *Jeſus*'s Miracles; and at preſent paſs to my third general Head, at firſt propoſed to be ſpoken to, and that is,

III. To conſider, what *Jeſus* means, when he appeals to his Works and Miracles,

as

as to a Teſtimony and witneſs of his Authority; and to ſhow that he did not properly and ultimately refer to thoſe done in the *Fleſh*, but to thoſe myſtical ones he would do in the *Spirit*, of which thoſe done in the Fleſh are but mere Types and Shadows.

And on this Head I ſhall be ſhort, there being no Occaſion of many Words on it. The *Biſhop* of *London* (24) has collected, many Sayings of *Jeſus* wherein he ſeems to appeal to the Works he then did and had done in Fleſh, as to a witneſs of him. But why might not *Jeſus* then Propheſy, and mean the ſpiritual Works which *He-in-us* would do? It is the known Way of the Prophets to ſpeak of Things to come, as if they were already paſt, becauſe ſuch Prophecys are not to be underſtood, till their Accompliſhment: Even ſo did *Jeſus* Propheſy, when he appeal'd to his Works, as I could prove from the Nature and Manner of his Expreſſions, but that the Argument would be dry and tedious; And therefore I refer the Matter entirely to the Fathers, who aſſerted that *Jeſus* propheſied in his *Miracles* as well as in his *Parables*, and that the Works, he then did in the Fleſh were but Types of his myſterious Operati-

(24) *Paſtoral Letter*, p. 25.

ons, that would be the Demonſtration of his Authority and Meſſiahſhip. Hence it is that *Origen* (25) ſays that *Jeſus*'s firſt coming was but Type and Shadow of his Spiritual Advent; and that his (26) true Miracles, by which his Authority is to be proved, are Spiritual: Hence it is that St. *Hilary* repeatedly ſays (27) that *Jeſus*'s Works were ſignificative and predictive of myſterious Operations, which we were eſpecially to look to. And Hence it is that all the other Fathers interpreted the Miracles of *Jeſus* in a myſtical and allegorical Senſe.

The Queſtion then is, to what Miracles did *Jeſus* truly and properly appeal, in the Opinion of the Fathers, for his Authority and Meſſiahſhip? Was it to his Typical or Antitypal Works? was it to the *ſhadow* or to the *ſubſiſtance* of his Operations?

(25) Adventus quidem Chriſti unus in Humilitate completus eſt, alius vero ſperatur in Gloria. Et hic primus Adventus in Carne, mythico quodam ſermone in Scripturis Sanctis Umbra ejus appellatur. *In Jeſu Nave Homil.* viii.

(26) Vera Chriſti Miracula & Sanatio Infirmorum eſt ſpiritalis. *In Matt. C. xxv.*

(27) Hæc licet in præſens geſta ſunt, quid tamen in futurum ſignificent, contuendum eſt. *In Matt. C. x. S. 1.* Chriſti Geſta aliud portendunt. *C. xii. S. 1.* Peragunt formam futuri geſta præſentia. *C. x xi.*

To

To his ſubſtantial Operations, to be ſure, which are and will be his ſpiritual ones upon the Soul that are greater than thoſe once done on Men's Bodys, and which will be a proper Proof of his divine Power. And to declare my Opinion freely I am only for ſuch a ſpiritual *Meſſiah*, who will cure the *Errors* call'd the Diſeaſes of Mankind, which *Jeſus* of *Nazareth* has not as yet done.

But not to diſpute this Point with *Biſhop Gibſon*, I will leave him in the Enjoyment of his Opinion of his literal *Meſſiah* and miraculous Operator on Men's Bodys; if he'll but indulge me in the Belief of my ſpiritual *Meſſiah* to come for the healing of modern Diſtempers call'd the Sins and Errors of Mankind. And in the mean time let us draw the Compariſon between his *litteral* and my *ſpiritual* Jeſus; and let the World judge, to whom the Preference is to be given for Power and Authority,

Biſhop *Gibſon* is for *Jeſus* of *Nazareth*'s Meſſiahſhip, becauſe he cured the *bodily blindneſs* of many miraculouſly; And a good Work it was: But I am for the Meſſiahſhip of a ſpiritual *Jeſus* to come, who will open the *blind Eyes* of our Underſtandings to diſcern Truth from Error, which will be a moſt glorious Operation;

Operation; that his *Jeſus* of *Nazareth* has not as yet done.

Biſhop *Gibſon* is for *Jeſus*'s Meſſiahſhip, who once cured *bodily Deafneſs* in many, which was indeed well done of him: But I am for the Meſſiahſhip of a ſpiritual *Jeſus* to come, to heal the *Deafneſs* of our Souls or their *Dulneſs* in Apprehenſion of ſublime Myſterys, which will be a divine Work, that his *Jeſus* has not as yet done.

Biſhop *Gibſon* is for *Jeſus*'s Meſſiahſhip, becauſe he cured Men's bodily *Lameneſs*, for which I do praiſe him: But I am for a ſpiritual *Jeſus*'s Meſſiahſhip, who will heal Mankind of their *Halting* between two and more Opinions; a more Bleſſed Work, that *Jeſus* of *Nazareth* has not as yet done for us!

And ſo, comparing all other Diſeaſes of Body and Soul together, I am for the *Jeſus*, who will heal the Diſeaſes of the Soul; and have a much leſs Regard for *Biſhop Gibſon*'s *Jeſus* who cured the Diſeaſes of a few Men's Bodys; but, for all that, am not angry with the *Biſhop* for his high Veneration of his *Jeſus*, neither would I by any Means have him proſecuted and puniſh'd for not being of the ſame Mind with me.

But,

But, becauſe the *Biſhop* ſuſpects me of Infidelity, in that I have ludicrouſly treated ſome of the Miracles of his *Jeſus*, which, by the by, he has not vindicated from the Abſurditys and Incredibilitys I charged them with; I will humour the *Biſhop*, and, ſuppoſing *Jeſus* wrought literally thoſe Miracles which are allegorically interpreted by me, will in thoſe very Miracles compare his *litteral* and my *ſpiritual* Jeſus together; and appeal to all Men of Conſideration, which is the moſt worthy of the Title and Honour of the true *Meſſiah*.

Biſhop *Gibſon* is for his *Jeſus*'s Meſſiahſhip, who miraculouſly drove the *Buyers* and *Sellers* out of the Temple, juſt as if a Man, was God to inveſt him with Power, ſhould furiouſly drive the *Butchers* and *Graſiers* with their Cattle, to the Confuſion of their ſeveral Propertys, out of *Smithfield*: A notable Miracle That! But I am for the ſpiritual *Jeſus*'s Meſſiahſhip who according to the Form of that typical Story, will at his Coming expel Eccleſiaſtical Merchants out of his Church, who make Merchandiſe of the Goſpel, Selling their *Bulls* and *Beaſts* and *fatlings* of the Letter: A moſt glorious and Beneficial Work to Mankind will this be!

be! And to prepare Men's Souls for the ſuſception of ſuch a ſpiritual *Jeſus*, I intend to publiſh a *Diſcourſe* of the Miſchiefs and Inconveniencies of an *Hireling-Prieſthood*, wherein it ſhall be proved, that Mankind can't be either good, wiſe or happy under the Kingdom of this *Meſſiah* to come, without an Abolition and Extirpation of them.

Biſhop *Gibſon* is for the Meſſiahſhip of his *Jeſus*, who *caſt the Devils out of the Madmen, and permitted them to enter into the Herd of Swine*, that *ran violently down a Precipice and were choak'd in the Sea:* How great a Miracle it was thus to cure the Madmen, the *Biſhop* may know beſt, being perhaps better acquainted with the Devil than I am; but was it not for Pity to the *Swineherds* for their Loſſes, I could even now laugh at the Thoughts of the Hogs running and tumbling down-hill, as if the *Devil* drove them: But leaving the Biſhop *calmly, decently* and *ſeriouſly* to admire the Wiſdom and Juſtice of his *Jeſus* in that Act, I am for the ſpiritual *Jeſus*, who according to the typical form of that Story, exorcis'd the furious and diabolical Tempers out of the *Jews* and *Gentiles* of old, whom no Chains of Reaſon could hold from doing Violence to the Chriſtians, till

till they were converted; and tho He permitted the like perſecuting and diabolical Spirits to enter into Eccleſiaſtical Swine; yet will they be precipitated into the *Sea* of the Knowledge of God, wherein they will be abſorpt with divine Viſions and Contemplations. O moſt glorious Work, that beſpeaks the Wiſdom, Power and Goodneſs of our ſpiritual *Jeſus* from beginning to the End of it.

Biſhop *Gibſon* admires his *Jeſus*, for his Transfiguration on Mount *Tabor*, tho neither He nor any body elſe can tell, wherein lay the Miracle, nor into what various Figures and Shapes *Jeſus* was transform'd: But I am for the ſpiritual *Jeſus*, whoſe glorious Transfiguration, after *ſix* grand Days of the Creation, will be conſpicuous, when with the Eyes of our Underſtanding we ſhall behold him metamorphoſed into the Forms of all the Types of him under the Law. I am now raviſh'd with the intellectual View of this Transfiguration; and believe, was I to ſet about it, I could give others (except the Biſhop) an Idea and Conception of it to their Aſtoniſhment at the Glory of *Jeſus* in it.

Biſhop *Gibſon* is for the Meſſiahſhip of *Jeſus* of *Nazareth*, becauſe he cured a *Woman of an Iſſue of Blood*, after ſhe had

ſpent all ſhe had upon Phyſicians to no purpoſe; which might be, or might not be a Miracle, for any Thing he can argue upon it: But I am for the ſpiritual *Jeſus*'s Meſſiahſhip, who at his Coming will, according to that Typical Story, cure the *Woman* of the Church of her *Iſſue of Blood*, that is ſhed in Perſecution and War, which her Eccleſiaſtical Phyſicians of the *Clergy* have not been able to ſtop tho they have receiv'd large Fees and Stipends of the Church to that Purpoſe. Will not this be a deſirable and beneficial Work to all Nations? And who knows not, (excepting the *Biſhop*) that it is of the Office of the true Meſſiah, to give *abundance of Peace* to Mankind, to *make the Lion to lye down with the Lamb*; and to induce Men to *break their Swords into Plow-ſhares*, and *their Spears into Pruning-hooks*; and to *make Wars to ceaſe* in all the World. Which Prophecys are ſo far from being fulfill'd by *Jeſus* of *Nazareth*, that there has been nothing but wrangling and jangling and ſcolding and fighting about him ever ſince. I wonder the want of the Accompliſhment of the foreſaid Prophecys has not long before now occaſion'd the Rejection of *Jeſus*'s Meſſiahſhip, or of the Authority of the Prophets.

Biſhop

Biſhop *Gibſon* is for his *Jeſus*'s being the Meſſiah, becauſe he cured an old *Woman* of a *Spirit* of, no body knows what, *Infirmity*; conſequently little or nothing is to be ſaid for the Greatneſs of that Miracle. But I am for the ſpiritual *Jeſus*'s Meſſiahſhip, who, according to the figure of that litteral Story, is to heal the *Woman* of the Church of her *Infirmity of the Spirit* of Prophecy, which *Jeſus* of *Nazareth* has not done for her, or there would not be ſo many Diſputes about Prophecys and their Interpretations, ſo far, as there is hardly one Prophecy that Chriſtians are agreed about the Senſe of. It is the grand Characteriſtick of the true *Meſſiah*, that he's to reſtore Prophecy and the Way of Interpretation of the Prophets, upon the allegorical Scheme too. I ſpeak this, not only upon the Authority of the Prophets themſelves, but upon an almoſt infinite number of Teſtimonys of ancient *Jews* and *Fathers*; accordingly I expect the Advent of a ſpiritual Meſſiah, who alone can do it, to heal the Church of her preſent *Infirmity*, and to reſtore the Art and Gift of Propheey.

Biſhop *Gibſon* is an Admirer of *Jeſus* of *Nazareth*, becauſe he told a poor Whore of *Samaria*, her Fortune of *having had five Husbands*, and being then an

Adultereſs with another Man ; which according to the Letter is ſuch a poor ſort of a Miracle, that I can hardly think of it without bluſhing : But I am an Adorer beforehand of the ſpiritual *Jeſus* who, according to that Type, will out of the Law and the Prophets, allegorically interpreted, tell the preſent heretical and adulterous Woman of the Church *all that ſhe has done*, and how ſhe has been wedded to the ſenſible Things of the *five* Books of *Moſes*, and is now an Adultereſs with the *Anti-Chriſt* of the Letter. Such an Information of the Church will be a moſt ſtupendous and miraculous Work, and a Demonſtration of our *Jeſus*'s Meſſiahſhip beyond Contradiction, in as much as it will be agreeable to the Opinion, that all Antiquity entertain'd of the true *Meſſiah*, *viz.* that he was to let us into the Sight, Knowledge and Underſtanding of the Wiſdom and Beauty of Providence thro' all Ages of the World.

Biſhop *Gibſon* admires *Jeſus* of *Nazareth* for *his curſing the Figtree*; *for not bearing Fruit out of Seaſon :* Shame on that Miracle, according to the Letter, and on all Admirers of it ! But I am for the ſpiritual *Jeſus* who at his Coming to the Figtree of his Church will make its preſent unfruitful State to *wither away*, and

cauſe

cauſe it to produce the Fruits of the Spirit, and allegorical Interpretations of the Scriptures, that are compared to ſweet and ripe Figs. For ſuch his Advent to this miraculous and beneficial Purpoſe I daily pray and ſay too, Bleſſed are all thoſe who love his Appearance!

After this Faſhion could I go thro' the other Miracles, I have treated on in theſe *Diſcourſes*; and upon the Compariſon ſet plainly before the Eyes of my *Readers* the Difference between the *litteral* Miracles of Biſhop *Gibſon*'s *carnal* Jeſus and the *allegorical* ones of my *ſpiritual* Jeſus, as to Stupendouſneſs, Uſe and Excellency: But, what I have here done in the ſeven Inſtances above, is enough to induce us to believe, with the Fathers, that *Jeſus*'s firſt Coming in the *Fleſh* was but Type and Shadow of his ſecond Advent in the *Spirit*; and that *Jeſus* of old when he appeal'd to his Works then done, as to a Witneſs of his Authority, did only Propheſy, and refer ultimately to his myſtical Operations, that are alone the Proof of his Godlike and divine Power. Biſhop *Gibſon* ſays (28) of me, that *pretending to raiſe the Actions and Miracles of our Saviour to a more exalted and ſpiritual Meaning, I*

(28) *Paſtoral Letter*, p. 3.

have

have labour'd to take away the Reality of them, and by that to deſtroy one of the principal Evidences of Chriſtianity. But I preſume now, he'll be ſenſible of the Raſhneſs and Incogitancy of that Accuſation. If he be not, I ſhall ſay of him, in Caſe he write any more for *Jeſus*'s *litteral* Miracles in Oppoſition to his *allegorical* ones, that he's like the Dog in the Fable (the *Biſhop* will excuſe the Coarſneſs of the Compariſon) that let go the *Subſtance* of his Mutton, and catch'd at the Shadow, and ſo, like a fooliſh *Cur* as he was, loſt both.

And thus have I done with the *Three* general Heads at firſt propoſed to be handled in theſe *Diſcourſes*. Now whether I am, upon the whole, an *Infidel* or *Beleiver* of Chriſtianity, the World is to judge. I'll make no more ſolemn Declarations of my Belief of it, much leſs at this Juncture of Time, when I am under Proſecution for Infidelity; becauſe it would be a ſneaking, tame and cowardly Act in me, and ſuch an Argument of that meanneſs of Spirit, as I abhor and deteſt. My *Works* ſhall ſpeak for me, in which being, conſcious of the Innocency of my Intentions, and of the Uſefulneſs of my Deſign, I mean to proceed; not doubting but ſome of our *Clergy*, upon

two

two or three more *Diſcourſes* againſt the Letter of the *New Teſtament*, will find me out, what I am, and whether I am not a true Profeſſor of the Religion of the ſpiritual and holy *Jeſus*.

In the mean Time, I'll not compound the Difference depending between Biſhop *Gibſon* and myſelf, upon any other Terms, than his making me ample Satisfaction for the Injurys done to my Reputation and low Fortunes. Tho he may thirſt after my Life, or at leaſt, my Liberty; yet under the Providence of God I fear not the Loſs of either. God be prais'd, this Kingdom is bleſs'd with ſuch a Civil Adminiſtration for Wiſdom, Juſtice and Mercy as no Nation of the World can equal. Our Magiſtrates are all Philoſophers, Lovers of Truth, and of an Enquiry into it; and ſo tender of the religious as well as of the civil Rights of the Subject, that I have nothing to dread from them.

There is ſomewhat *popular* indeed, tho nothing true nor rational, in the Clamour and Accuſations of the *Clergy* againſt me. Biſhop *Gibſon* would inſinuate (29) that my *Diſcourſes* on *Miracles* ſtrike *at the Foundation of civil Society*; but by an un-

(29) *Paſtoral Letter*, p. 35.

natural

natural Consequence of his own making. I confess, it is an heinous Crime to write any Thing, that tends to the Subversion or Prejudice of the civil Society: But how will the *Bishop* make me guilty of it? If the *Clergy* will not be Disturbers of the Peace of the publick upon my *Discourses*; it's certain, that the Quiet of the World, which I wish and aim at, will be inviolably kept and preserv'd for all me. My Followers indeed, when I walk the Streets of this *City*, are *numerous*; and if any of them should break the Peace, what serves my *Lord Mayor*'s Power for, but to chastise them for it? As for my self and my Adherents at home which as yet are *without Number*, we are all *Quietists* and should act against our Consciences and Religion, if we should injure any Man in his Person and Property. But I smile to see a *Clergyman* all on a sudden, like the *Bishop*, so tender of the Welfare of the Publick; when *Ecclesiasticks*, in all Ages past, have been the *Bane* of Society and the *Pest* of Mankind, as appears from the Wars and Persecutions, they have rais'd in the World; and from that Strife, Variance and Discords, they have occasion'd in Citys and Familys. And with Submission to the *Bishop*, who I hope will not be angry for my saying it, I am sure, the *Clergy* at this Juncture, are

are like an *high-mettal'd blind Horse*, that, were they not ridden by the Civil Authority with a ſtrait Rein, would be oppreſſing and trampling upon all, that ſtood in the Way of their Intereſts, to the Diſturbance of *Civil Society*.

Profaneneſs too do's the *Biſhop* charge me with. But why ſo? Becauſe I ridicule the Nonſenſe and Abſurdity's of *Jeſus*'s Miracles according to the Letter, which he venerates. Very fine indeed! The *Biſhop* would worſhip the *Head* of an *Aſs*, and a wiſer Man than himſelf, without the Charge of Profaneneſs, muſt not laugh at his fooliſh Superſtition.

And *Blaſphemy* laſtly does the *Biſhop* accuſe me of: And this is a ſad *Bugbear* Word, that has frighted Abundance of People into dreadful Apprehenſions of my Guilt, even to the Abhorrence of me. But the *Biſhop* ſhould firſt have defined, what is meant by *Blaſphemy*, and have proved me guilty of it, before he made his Exclamations: Or the *Turks* may ſay that a Jeſt upon their *Alcoran*, in which there are no Contradictions, is as much a *Blaſphemy*, as any Ludicrouſneſs upon the *Goſpels*, which are full of Inconſiſtencies. That there is ſuch a Sin or Error, call'd *Blaſphemy*, according to the Scriptures, is certain: But our *Divines* are undetermined

about the Nature of it. I intend to take my Opportunity to treat on the Sin of Blaſphemy, and to prove, *Miniſters* of the *Letter* are the only Perſons, that can be guilty of it. *Miniſters* of the *Letter*, upon the Authority of the Fathers are the Worſhippers of the *Apocalyptical Beaſt*; and anti-allegorical Expoſitions are that Blaſphemy, St. *John* writes of, which the *Beaſt* and his Worſhippers, will open their Mouths in, againſt the moſt High. This ſhall be proved as clear as the Light. But when I do it, I would not have any think, it is with an Intention to bring the Biſhops of *London*, *Litchfield*, and St. *Davids* or any other *Divines*, under Proſecution for that heinous Sin: No, my God is omnipotent, omniſcient and omnipreſent; and knows how and when to reckon with ſuch Blaſphemers, without calling upon the civil Magiſtrate to do it for him. Should I importune the Civil Authority to execute Vengeance upon them, I ſhould make a fooliſh *Calf* or a Senſeleſs *Idol* of my God, that was unable, or knew not how, nor when to vindicate his own Cauſe. Surely the *Biſhop* of *London*, upon his Proſecution of me for Blaſphemy, muſt think his God now *aſleep* or *gone a Journey* from Home; or he would not be for taking God's own Work

Work out of his Hands, and committing it to the Care of the Civil Magiſtrate.

The *Biſhop* moreover ſhould conſider, that the Words *profane* and *blaſphemous* are of no uſe and ſignification among Philoſophers, who in Diſputation never caſt them at each other, however they may differ in Opinion. Philoſophers are all ſuppoſed to be ſuch profound Venerators of the Deity, as they would not be guilty of *Profaneneſs* and *Blaſphemy* for the whole World. If any of our School of *Free-Thinkers* ſhould ſay of his Opponent that he's *profane* and *blaſphemous*, he would be reprimanded for want of Wit, Temper and good Manners; and be told that he's like a *Billingſgate Scold*, who has Recourſe to impertinent bad Language, when her Reaſon fails her for better Rhetorick.

But it may be, for ought I know, the *Biſhop* has ſome Deſign in his Accuſations againſt me for *Profaneneſs* and *Blaſphemy*; but I hope it is a better than to prejudice the Civil Magiſtrate, or to incenſe the Populace.

According to the Fathers I am ſo far from being a Blaſphemer, that they ſay, *Chriſt* upon the litteral Interpretation of his Miracles is metamorphoſed into the falſe-Chriſt, call'd *Anti-Chriſt*. Whether there

is any Truth in this their Opinion I can't be positive, till the Experiment is fully made. But if our *Clergy* will keep their Temper, and grant me a clear Stage of Battle, I'll try it out; and see whether I can't, by the Club of Reason and primitive Authority give their *Anti Christ* a fatal Blow: Who knows but I may give Peace to the Church, and reconcile all Partys by it?

However this may be; I am sure, no Man can wish for a greater Advantage over his Enemy, than I have over the *Bishop* in this Controverty: But he shall find me a generous Adversary, who will make no worse use of my Advantage over him than now and then to put him in Mind of his *Pastoral Letter*, and of the Prosecution; unless I should be tempted, ere long, to publish my *Moderatorial* Letter, like his *Pastoral* one, to the People of *London* and *Westminster*, with *Ten* wholesome Rules in it, not only to caution them against false Prophets and false Teachers without forgetting the *Bishop* of the *Diocese*, but to direct them to the Ecclesiastical Fountain of the growing Sins, Errors and Infidelity of the Age, which the *Clergy* know I am of Ability to lay open.

When

When I began the Publication of these *Discourses*, I own, I laid a *Trap* for some considerable *Clergyman*; but little imagined, the great *Bishop* of *London* would be caught in it. But now I have taken hold of him, I'll not release him out of the Controversy, till he has sorely repented of his Ignorance, or Malice in calling me a *Writer, in Favour of Infidelity.*

So much at present for the Bishop of *London*, I have been the quicker of late in the printing of *this*; because I am given to understand, the *Bishop* of St. *Davids* stays for it, intending to make but one Work of it, and answer all *six Discourses* together. I hope my *Rabbi*'s Letter here will be thought by him, a good Payment for his Patience. And now I shall be in Expectation of his Mountainous Production, and where I shall hide myself from the terrible Strokes of his Pen, I have not as yet consider'd.

I am not a little pleas'd to see a *Couple* of Dissenting Preachers, *viz.* Dr. *Harris* and Mr. *Atkinson*, listed into the Controversy against me: if they had kept their Necks out of the Collar, they might have dissembled and pretended, that, upon the Conclusion of the Battle, when it would have appear'd, I am a real Contender for Primi-

Primitive Chriſtianity, they had a better Underſtanding of the Fathers, and a clearer View of my Deſign, than to ſuſpect me of Blaſphemy and Infidelity: But now they are engaged with equal Spite, Ignorance and Defamations againſt me, they muſt take their ſhare of the Fate and Shame, with the *Clergy*, upon the Concluſion of the Controverſy.

There's no Body can think it worth my while to beſtow a Sixpenny *Pamphlet* upon either of theſe *Gentlemen*, but for all that, they ſhall not be altogether ſlighted and neglected by me. I have made a Collection of their Rhetorical Flowers, which occaſionally ſhall be preſented to the Publick, to the Admiration of their Wit, Reaſon, Learning and Eloquence. And at preſent only take Notice, that they are *both* for the Perſecution of me; but not ſo much for my Opinions, as the Indecency, Irreverence, and Immorality of my Stile; forfooth! which is ſuch a Diſtinction, as may be eaſily Stretch'd to the Juſtification of the Perſecution of all Authors, whom the Prieſthood in Power ſhall not like. Mr. *Atkinſon's* Argument for the Perſecution of me, is much the ſame with that, which *John Calvin* uſed for the Perſecution of that great Philoſopher *Servetus*; the Injuſtice and Cruelty of whoſe

whoſe death and ſufferings is a greater Reproach to the Name of *Calvin*, than the Martyrdom of any *Proteſtant* can be to the Memory of any Popiſh Prelate.

To conclude, what I have written, in theſe *Six Diſcourſes*, is with a View to the Glory of God, the Advancement of Truth, the Happineſs of Mankind, the Demolition of *Babylon*, the Edification of *Jeruſalem*, and the Demonſtration of the Meſſiahſhip of our Spiritual *Jeſus*, to whom be Glory for ever. *Amen*.

F I N I S.

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